

DOCUMENTS  
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HISTORY  
OF THE  
COMMUNIST  
PARTY  
OF INDIA

Edited by  
G. Adhikari

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**DOCUMENTS OF THE HISTORY  
OF THE  
COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA**

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# Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India

Volume III-B

1927

Edited with Introductory  
and Explanatory Notes by  
G. Adhikari



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## **Publisher's Note**

The National Council of the Communist Party of India entrusted Dr G. Adhikari to undertake the work of collecting, editing and annotating the documents relating to the history of the Communist Party of India. This is Part B of the third volume of the series.



## Preface

This is Volume III-B, which is devoted to the documents of the year 1927. As stated earlier, this volume as a whole is to cover the years 1926-1929 which is a period in which the young Communist Party makes a breakthrough to mass activity, bringing into being a militant movement of the working class and the peasantry which adopted the Red Flag as the symbol of its class organisation and unity.

Spontaneous strike struggles of a modern type had already begun in India in the post-World-War-I years, in the early context of the general crisis of capitalism and the new rising mass upsurge of the national-liberation movement. Such were the strikes of workers of the Buckingham and Carnatic Textile Mills, Madras (1918), strikes of the textile workers of Bombay and the jute mill workers in Calcutta in the early twenties and the North-West Railway Workers' organisation and strike (1920-25). It was on the basis of this strike upsurge that the AITUC—the premier all-India organisation of the working class—was founded in 1920 by moderate trade-union leaders like Wadia, Baptista, N. M. Joshi and Dewan Chamanlal. The Red Flag, which was first raised by Singaravelu Chettiar in 1923 in a workers' meeting on Madras Beach and first carried at the head of their strike procession by North-West Railway workers in 1925, was raised in the first ever May Day meetings held in Bombay, Calcutta and Amritsar in 1927.

This signalled the emergence of the militant working-class movement which the communists working through the workers' and peasants' parties had begun to build.

The Communist Party, when it was in the group stage in the first half of the twenties, was not declared illegal by the British imperialists. But they sought to curb the

activities of the communists by launching the Peshawar Conspiracy Case (1921-23) and the Kanpur Conspiracy Case (1924) and sentencing individual communists to various terms of imprisonment. An official legal authority in the course of the latter case made a statement that propaganda of communism as such was not illegal. This prompted some legalists to convene "The First Communist Conference" in Kanpur in the last week of December 1925. Representatives of genuine communist groups functioning in different parts of the country turned up at this conference and took the legally formed Communist Party of India and its central executive committee firmly in their hand.

Two crucial questions arose at that time. *One*, will the genuine Communist Party of India be allowed by the authorities to function legally? *Two*, what should be the relation of the Communist Party of India with the International working-class and communist movement, particularly with the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) and with the Communist International (CI)? Initially, Indian communists may have had some illusions on the first question. But soon they came to a firm and correct stand on both the questions *in principle*. These questions are discussed in a document in Volume III-A (1926) and in another document to be reproduced in Volume III-C (1928).

A realistic approach to the first question enabled the communists to make a breakthrough to mass activity by organising the workers' and peasants' parties. They emerged, firstly, in Bengal and Bombay (1926-27) and later in the Punjab and UP. Their precursors, as we have seen, were the Labour Swaraj Party in Bengal (1925), the Congress Labour Party in Bombay (1926) and the Labour Kishan Party of Singaravelu in Madras (1924).

Workers' and peasants' parties enabled the communists to overcome the hurdle put in their way by British imperialists' repression. They enabled them to build militant mass trade unions; to make a small beginning of a radical agitation among the peasants (Bengal and Punjab); and

make a beginning of a radical youth movement. It was through the workers' and peasants' parties that the communists developed a left wing inside the existing trade-union movement represented by the AITUC and in the Indian National Congress.

The left wing in the Indian trade-union movement strengthened its position by building militant mass trade unions with class-conscious vanguard at its head and the Red Flag as its symbol. It also opposed the reformist Amsterdam TU International, which did not even support India's struggle for independence, to draw the AITUC in its trail.

The left wing in the Indian National Congress put before it a socio-economic program of complete independence—which was approximating to a program of anti-imperialist, antifeudal democratic revolution.

Finally the workers' and peasants' parties carried forward the traditions of the Indian national revolutionaries who saw in the emergence and the strengthening of the great socialist Soviet Union a staunch ally of India and other countries like China fighting for their independence against imperialism.

These features of the activities of the Communist Party of India working through the workers' and peasants' parties find their concrete expression in the events and documents recorded in this volume devoted to 1927.

The inaugural conference of the League against Imperialism brings together Indian national revolutionaries like Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, Madame Cama (with her blessing), Saklatvala, Jayasurya Naidu, Bakar Ali Mirza and leaders of the national movement of India like Jawaharlal Nehru and Motilal Nehru, together with leaders of other countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America fighting against British, French, Dutch and US imperialism for their independence. Jawaharlal Nehru's detailed confidential report to the Congress working committee, the resolution on India passed at the conference and intervention of Motilal Nehru at the meeting of the executive committee of the League later in the year are

historic which show how our freedom movement and its forward-looking leaders were becoming conscious of the need for international allies in our struggle for independence. This resulted in the Indian National Congress affiliating itself to the League against Imperialism.

Shapurji Saklatvala's visit to India, his tour and his speeches in various industrial centres, his open correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi helped to build the left wing in the trade-union as well as the national freedom movement. The release of S. A. Dange and Shaukat Usmani from their Kanpur Conspiracy Case conviction falls in this year. Shaukat Usmani's *Peshawar to Moscow* is published. Dange's *Hell Found*, a sharp exposure of British jail conditions, was to come out next year (1928). Dange played an important role in the 8th congress of the AITUC when an organised left wing began to function in that organisation and Dange was elected the assistant secretary of the organisation.

The sedition trial against the pamphlet *India and China* and its writer and publisher, namely P. Spratt and S. S. Mirajkar, again emphasised the need of international allies in our struggle for independence against the common enemy—imperialism. It is significant that the same pamphlet printed as an appendix of the report of the Brussels conference of the League against Imperialism. The effort of the British rulers to convict the author and the publisher failed, thanks to the verdict of the jury. After this the British never allowed the communists on trial the benefit of a jury trial!

7 November 1927 was the tenth anniversary of the great October socialist revolution. It was celebrated in workers' meetings by the Workers' and Peasants' Party. In one such meeting Dange spoke and said that he had received an invitation to go to Moscow. But the British government would never issue him a passport to go there. But Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru were both able to visit the USSR in those days. That visit sowed the seeds of a friendship between our two countries which had far-

reaching consequences in later years for world peace and for the benefit of the two countries and peoples.

The balancesheet of these events and the activities of the workers' and peasants' parties finds its expression in the Madras session of the Indian National Congress. The session adopted the complete independence resolution by Jawaharlal Nehru, which the communists had been unsuccessfully putting forward for the last several years. A republican conference was organised simultaneously with the Congress session by the leftists with Jawaharlal Nehru at its head to ensure that there was no resiling from the independence resolution. In this session an organised left wing led by the Workers' and Peasants' Party leaders functioned both in the AICC and in the open session. This is recorded by Comrade Muzaffar Ahmad.

Thus the year 1927 and its events have the significance that our struggle has international allies in the countries and peoples fighting for their independence and in the great socialist Soviet Union, against the common enemy—imperialism.

*Ajoy Bhavan,  
New Delhi,  
11 April, 1979*

**G. ADHIKARI**



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# 1927

## INTRODUCTION

The documents of this year reflect the developments preparatory to the emergence of the red-flag movement and the upsurge of militant workingclass movement connected with it. We see the central executive committee of the party formed at the first communist conference in Kanpur functioning and holding three meetings during the year. A workers' and peasants' party emerges in Bombay after the model of the one in Bengal to develop mass work. A left wing begins to emerge in the AITUC as well as in the Indian National Congress under the initiative of the communists Two British comrades, members of the CPGB, viz George Allison and some time after him, Philip Spratt, are seen working and suffering shoulder to shoulder with the Indian comrades in these developments *Ganavani*, in continuation of *Langal* in Bengal, *Kirti* in Punjab and *Kranti* in Bombay begin to appear as the organs of the workingclass movement

### I

#### WORKING COUNCIL OF THE CEC

Leading members of the CEC elected at Kanpur assembled in Bombay to meet Shapurji Saklatvala who was arriving from England on 14 January 1927. "Working

“council” is not defined in the party constitution as adopted at the Kanpur conference but it probably meant “the office-bearers”.<sup>1</sup> Most of the comrades elected as office-bearers were present. Muzaffar Ahmad records: “The visit of Shapurji Saklatvala was the occasion of our meeting in Bombay. Janakiprasad (Bagerhatta) had accompanied me. Shamsuddin and Krishnaswamy Iyengar had also arrived respectively from Lahore and Madras.”<sup>2</sup> Ghate, Joglekar and Nimbkar were in Bombay. All these were among the office-bearers of the CEC.<sup>3</sup>

Of the resolutions adopted by the working council (Document 1), the first, second, third, seventh and eighth refer to the proposal to hold the second communist conference in Lahore between 17 and 20 March 1927. Towards the end of 1926, the proposal of holding a second communist conference was being discussed among the leading CEC members. Krishnaswamy Iyengar writing from Madras on 20 October 1926 said “While in Bombay, I saw your letter to Ghate. All of us are in the same unsettled state of mind as regards the conference. I am writing to Bag (Bagerhatta-GA) today and shall let you know on receipt of his reply. It would be indeed better if we could hold the conference in Bombay itself. But others’ convenience should be looked too.”<sup>4</sup> In another letter to Muzaffar Ahmad, he wrote on 2 November 1926: “By last mail I got a letter with a manifesto from abroad and after perusal passed it on to JB (Janakiprasad Bagerhatta) since it is an important one... In the light of the contents of this manifesto I think it is essential that we should hold this conference. That Englishman Campbell who is in Bombay and who met our Ghate twice has been asked by them to speak at this conference of ours. We can also hear what he has to say. But before the conference itself I think that we should meet at a preliminary meeting

1. *Documents*, Vol 2, pp 662-64.

2. *Myself and the CPI*, p 462.

3. *Documents*, Vol 2, p 667.

4. Meerut Record, P 2122 (1).

to discuss everything about this conference."<sup>5</sup> So Krishnaswamy suggests that "all of us assemble in Bombay and discuss".

This was in November 1926. By December a reception committee was formed and Bagerhatta, Muzaffar and perhaps Ghate were all in Lahore making preparations for the conference. At this time they came to know from a message in the *National Herald* that Shapurji Saklatvala was arriving in Bombay on 14 January 1927 and they all came to Bombay to meet him. Before that the reception committee had already sent a letter to Saklatvala asking him to preside over the coming second communist conference. The letter which S. V. Ghate, the joint secretary of the party, sent to Saklatvala before his arrival is on record. Ghate says therein:

"On behalf of the CPI I extend to you our ~~heartiest~~ welcome on your return to India... I believe you could not have chosen a better time than the present, though it would have been much better if you had been able to attend the Congress in session just concluded when you could have seen all the leaders in their procapitalist bourgeois mentality..."

"Our own party, which came in existence a year ago under the most adverse conditions, has not been able to make headway with its program. However, we have great hopes that with your suggestions and lead, we shall be able to do some substantial progress with our work.

"Comrade Bagerhatta (jt secretary of CPI) is making arrangements with the local group at Lahore for holding our next session shortly"<sup>6</sup>

This letter was dated 1 January 1927. The joint secretaries met Saklatvala on board the ship when it arrived in Bombay. This was a brief meeting of welcome and nothing positive was fixed; so the joint secretaries wrote to him again the same day:

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5. Meerut Record, P 2221 (2).

6. *Ibid*, P 1287 (14).

"When we met you on board this morning, we expected you would be giving us some time exclusively for our discussions... In view of the fact that we were busy organising at Lahore for the approaching conference and that we have run down here only to meet you, it is absolutely necessary that we should immediately hold conversations with you to know your views and get your cooperation in making the conference successful and our party consolidated and effective. You will kindly let us know when and where we should meet."

Before this meeting could take place, Saklatvala issued a statement to the press saying that he would not preside over the conference of a communist party which is not affiliated to the Communist International. This letter appeared in the *Indian National Herald* of Bombay. The joint secretaries immediately wrote to Saklatvala, protesting against his attitude. They wrote: "We in India have every right to form a communist party and to contribute in our way to the cause of international communism. The question of international affiliation comes later. This is what we understand from the opinion expressed by the communist leaders of international reputation." They concluded, "All the same in spite of your noncooperation with us, we extend our hearty welcome to our conference at Lahore."

Saklatvala was to get into touch with the national movement, particularly with its left wing and to give it a revolutionary orientation. He did not want to begin his tour in India with presiding over a communist conference. This, he thought, would hamper his main work.

It is this incident that finds expression in the resolutions if the working council of the CEC adopted on 16 January 1927. The comrades decided to go ahead with the conference and elected Muzaffar Ahmad to preside over it. These initial differences with Saklatvala were resolved when he met the comrades and also George Allison and Philip Spratt, both of whom were there in Bombay at the time.

George Allison, a CPGB member and wellknown coal-miners' leaders, came to India, as we have seen, in April 1926, as Donald Campbell and was moving secretly all over the country contacting trade-unionists. He was in touch with Joglekar in Bombay and with Muzaffar Ahmad in Calcutta. His assignment was to help the young communist movement here to get into trade unions and start a militant wing there. George Allison was in Calcutta from November 1926 end to January 1927 (first two weeks). He was in touch with active trade-unionists in Bombay through K. N. Joglekar. In both the places he was contacting leftwing trade-unionists. The police (CID special branch) in both places was watching his activities. His movements and contacts in Calcutta seem to have led them to suspect him to be a British communist. He came to Bombay in the second week of January to meet Saklatvala. Philip Spratt, another young member of the CPGB who had arrived in India 30 December 1926, was also there at the time.

The problem created by Saklatvala probably involved their moving together in the open and must have led to the confirmation of the suspicion of the police, who must have also received reports from the London Scotland Yard as to the real identity of "Donald Campbell". Allison returned to Calcutta on 20 or 21 January 1927. Earlier he had given his passport for safe-keeping to Shibnath Banerjee, who had given it to Kalidas Bhattacharya another trade-unionist for the same purpose. "On 22 January 1927 the rooms of Kalidas Bhattacharya in Calcutta were searched and in course of that search the passport of Donald Campbell was recovered. On the following day, Donald Campbell was arrested."<sup>7</sup> In the Meerut Record there is a notebook of Kishorilal Ghosh which says that Campbell was arrested under some sections of passport act and also some sections of CrPC. On record is a letter of "D. Campbell" from Presidency Jail to K. L.

Ghosh to get him released on bail. He was released on bail. He stood his trial in Bombay in March 1927 and was sentenced to 1½ years' rigorous imprisonment. The *Report of the CPGB Congress of 1927* states (at p 57) further that "George Allison, for some time past had been actively helping in the Indian trade-union movement, being actually elected chairman of the reception committee of the All India TUC on the eve of his arrest."<sup>8</sup>

Allison did his term with hard labour in Yerawada Jail where he was from 23 March 1927 to 20 May 1928.<sup>9</sup> His release date was a couple of days ahead. But the police took him under escort from jail to a ship in Bombay port proceeding to England and released him there, thus preventing him from contacting any trade-unionist or communist in India after his release.

As for Saklatvala, he later understood the situation. In a letter dated 18 January 1927, addressed to S. V. Ghate and J. P. Bagerhatta he said: 'If you want to hold any conference of communist brethren of India, no one desires to stop you, and I am perfectly willing to do whatever is in my power to make such a conference a success so that out of your efforts a regular and properly authorised communist party of India may take birth.' In the same letter he suggested alternative dates suitable to him in Delhi and Lahore in the next months.

As to the meeting of the working council of the CEC itself, it took place from 16 to 18 January 1927 in Bombay. Present at this meeting were Muzaffar Ahmad, J. P. Bagerhatta, Krishnaswamy Iyengar, R. S. Nimbkar, Shamsuddin Hassan and S. V. Ghate. As we see from the resolutions produced here, the meeting appointed a committee to draft a new constitution for the Communist Party. It decided to organise a workers' and peasants' party in Bombay and adopted a resolution on its structure. Muzaffar Ahmad, in his reminiscences, recalls two more decisions taken at this meeting: "A Marathi weekly named *Kranti* would be published in Bombay; Bengali weekly

8. *Ibid*

9. *Ibid*

*Ganavani* having ceased publication, it was decided to revive it. It was further decided that Donald Campbell would stay in Calcutta and the newly-arrived Philip Spratt would stay in Bombay.”<sup>10</sup> The meeting also decided finally to elect Muzaffar Ahmad unanimously “for the presidentship of the ensuing conference”.

This proposed second communist conference, however, never took place. In its place, an extended meeting of the CEC was held in Bombay in May 1927, which, as we will see further on, adopted a new constitution of the party and reorganised the office-bearers of the CEC.

This meeting also passed a resolution on “The Need for a Workers’ and Peasants’ Party”, including its program of immediate demands and its organisational structure. It is on the model of the party in Bengal. In fact this resolution on the need for a workers’ and peasants’ party, with its program of political, economic, and social demands concretising the general national demand of complete national independence, as well as the resolution of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Party are drafts which were further elaborated in the resolutions of the fuller meeting of the CEC held from 29 to 31 May 1927 in Bombay.<sup>11</sup>

## II

### INDIA AT THE BRUSSELS CONGRESS OF THE LEAGUE AGAINST IMPERIALISM

The documents of the Brussels congress of the League against Imperialism have a certain relevance here. The foundation of this organisation and its subsequent activities played a role in the leftwing politics of the country. Leaders of the Indian National Congress and Indian communists participated in it. Its documents later figured in the Meerut conspiracy case. The documents produced here are in the main only those directly connected with India.

10. *Myself and the CPI*, p 462.

11. Cf *infra* Document 13.



*Indian and other delegates at the LAI congress (from left) 6. Balkar Ali Mirza, 7. A.C.N. Nambiar, 8. Virendranath Chattipadhyaya, 9. Kamala Nehru, 10. Jawaharlal Nehru; (from right) 1. G. Hirlekar, 3. Jaisurya Naidu, 4. Barakatullah.*

### *Introduction*

The official list of delegates and organisations from India who participated in the foundation congress was headed by Jawaharlal Nehru (Indian National Congress). It includes Prof M. Barakatullah (Hindustan Gadar Party), Bakar Ali Mirza (Oxford Majlis), S. A. Rahman (Edinburgh Indian Students' Union); Muhammad (Indian Students' Federation, Paris); Tarini Sinha (Indian Buro of the ILP); Jaisurya Naidu and Moni Sen (Hindustan Association of Central Europe); Dr Bhatt (Indian Workers' Welfare League, London); A. C. N. Nambiar (representative of *Hindu*, Madras); Ganpule (?) (representative of *Kesari*, Poona); V. Chattopadhyaya (Association of Indian Journalists of Europe); Dr Naidu (Hyderabad Association, Berlin branch).

Apart from the official report of the congress—*The Flaming Signal from Palais Egmont* (German, 1927), we have reports from the Indian participants in the congress: Confidential report made by J. Nehru to the working committee of the Congress; another public report made by him to the AICC (Bombay session, May 1927) which is printed in *Indian Quarterly Register* (1927, Vol 2) and a detailed article on the subject by Bakar Ali Mirza published in the *Modern Review* (May 1927). *India and China* by An Internationalist (Philip Spratt) and published by S. S. Mirajkar on behalf of the Workers' and Peasants' Party of Bombay in May 1927 has given a comprehensive report on the proceedings and resolutions of the conference in its appendix. This contains a resolution on imperialism which is not printed here.

The idea of holding such a world congress against imperialism and national oppression arose out of the massive anti-imperialist upsurge and struggles in China, India and Egypt in the mid-twenties. We have seen how an international conference was held in Canton in 1925-26 and how Indian soldiers stationed in Hongkong by the British deserted their posts and joined this conference. It was in this situation that the communists in Europe took the initiative to hold a world congress against imperialism to



*The presidium: (L to R) Jawaharlal Nehru, George Lansbury, Edo Fimmen, Lu Tsung ln, H. Lianu.*

support the national movements of the countries of Asia, Africa and South America and to focus world opinion on this burning issue of contemporary politics. The preparations for the congress began early in 1926.

Letters of invitation and for messages to the leading anti-imperialist figures of the world were sent out by the middle of March 1926. One such letter came to Mahatma Gandhi at his Sabarmati address and another to the general secretary of the AITUC. Gandhiji's reply was sent on 3 April 1926, and is in the record of the League against Imperialism. It was addressed to L. Gibarti (Hungary), who together with Willi Muenzenberg (Germany), Edo Fimmen (Holland) and V. Chattopadhyaya were the main organisers of the preparatory work. The letter read:<sup>12</sup>

"I have your letter for which I thank you. I appreciate the sentiment underlying your proposal. But I consider myself wholly unfit to shoulder the burden. My methods too of serving the oppressed people are so different from those generally accepted by socialists and they are yet in the nature of an experiment. I therefore fight shy of any organisation that I do not know thoroughly and that I cannot serve usefully."

Gandhiji's rather noncommittal and cautious reply was later replaced by a warmer message sent on the eve of the congress and which was read at the congress:

"I thank you very cordially for your invitation to the Brussels international congress against colonial oppression and imperialism. I regret my work here in India prevents my taking part in the congress. I wish you, however, from the depths of my heart every success to your deliberations."<sup>13</sup>

Mahabub-ul Haq, secretary of the AITUC, wrote from Calcutta on 8 April 1926, saying: "Your invitation received. Will consider and send you reply soon."<sup>14</sup>

Jawaharlal Nehru who was in Europe since April 1926

12. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 30, p 223.

13. Quoted by Bakar Ali Mirza in *Modern Review*, May 1927

14. Record of LAI.

was already in touch with the organisers of the Brussels congress in the latter part of 1926. In a letter to Motilal Nehru dated 16 November 1926 he wrote about the "League against Oppression in the Colonies" which was then proposing to hold its congress in Brussels on 20 January 1927. He wrote: "AITUC promises to send a representative. INC should send a representative who is an economist and is conversant with British policy and military matters in India." He suggested that the AICC should send Shoaib Qureshi as its representative, while he himself would like to go to Brussels to "just meet people".<sup>15</sup> But the AICC secretary Rangaswami Iyengar sent a letter on 22 December 1926 to L. Gibarti stating that Nehru would attend the League congress as a delegate of the Indian National Congress.<sup>16</sup> Nehru's letter to Rangaswami on the eve of his leaving Switzerland for Brussels shows that he is already deeply involved in the issues to come up before the congress there. On 21 January 1927 he wrote about a joint Indo-Chinese declaration at Brussels. On 25 January 1927 he commented on the "strange omission of all reference to the Chinese situation in proceedings at Gauhati" and added, "I find Indian troops are being sent to China and Lord Irwin has addressed the assembly on the subject." He called swarajists, liberals and no-changers as 'all moderates' who are frightened by the very mention of independence.<sup>17</sup>

The congress which opened on 10 February 1927 in the grand building of Palais Egmont placed at the disposal of the organisers by the government of Belgium was a historic gathering, the first of its kind, as it was attended by the leading figures in the national freedom movements of Asia, Africa and South America on the one hand and by the militant leaders of the trade-union and labour

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15. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Selected Works*, Vol 2, pp 250-51.

16. Ibid, p 256. Gauhati session later confirmed this: "The Congress appoints Jawaharlal Nehru as its representative to the congress of oppressed nations which will be held on 20 January next." *Report of the INC-41st Session, Gauhati* (Published by AICC, Madras, 1926), pp 136-37.

17. Ibid, pp 256 & 258.

movements of the imperialist countries of Europe and America. In his confidential report to the working committee of the Indian National Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru said: "The Brussels congress, regarded from any point of view, was an event of first class importance and it is likely to have farreaching results." Describing how the congress originated, Jawaharlal Nehru said: "The idea of holding an international congress at Brussels apparently originated with a small group in Berlin. This group was probably in touch with Soviet Russia and the Russians approved of the idea. But the Russians kept themselves severely aloof from the congress because they thought that too close an association might frighten many people."<sup>18</sup>

Preliminary and informal meetings of such delegates as had arrived were held on 7 and 8 February. Jawaharlal Nehru says: "I arrived in Brussels on the evening of the 6th and took part in all the informal meetings. On the 9th representatives of the press were invited and the organisers and a few delegates representing different countries made statements to them." In the course of his statement to the press Jawaharlal Nehru said:

"The Indian national movement has welcomed with the liveliest sympathy and hope the success of the nationalists in China. It has been a matter of great shame and sorrow that the British government should venture to send Indian troops to China to coerce the Chinese. You are probably aware that the National Congress has protested in the strongest language against this and the nationalist members of the Indian legislature wanted to raise this issue in the legislative assembly, but the English viceroy exercised his veto on the ground that it raised matters of foreign policy."<sup>19</sup>

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18. *Ibid*

19. "On 25th January in the legislative assembly, Mr Srinivas Iyengar moved an adjournment motion to raise the question of the government of India sending troops to China. This was at first ruled by the president as in order but before adjourning, the president read the governor-general's message disallowing the motion on the ground that it could not be moved without detriment to public interest and no discussion on the motion could take place." —*Indian Quarterly Register, 1927, Vol 1, p 247.*

# **DAS FLAMMENZEICHEN VOM PALAIS EGMONT**

**OFFIZIELLES PROTOKOLL  
DES  
KONGRESSES GEGEN KOLONIALE UNTERDRÜCKUNG  
UND IMPERIALISMUS  
BRÜSSEL, 10.-13. FEBRUAR 1927**

Herausgegeben  
von der  
**Liga gegen Imperialismus  
und für nationale Unabhängigkeit**

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**1. AUFLAGE / BERLIN 1927**

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**NEUER DEUTSCHER VERLAG, BERLIN W8**

*Cover of the Report of the First Congress of LAI  
(in German)*

Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian leaders have emphatically on behalf of the people of India expressed their ardent hope that the Chinese nationalists will bring about the final emancipation of China. The Indian press have condemned the government's action and mass meetings have been held in the various parts of the country for this purpose. India is today with China not only because she has every sympathy with her but because she feels that China's successful fight is the most hopeful sign of inevitable downfall of imperialism."<sup>20</sup>

The congress proper opened on the 10th and held in all ten sessions up to the night of 14th when it concluded. Describing the hall in the Palais Egmont where the sessions of the congress were held, Nehru recorded; "Our national flag, white, green and red, was there put up with the flags of other countries but not with charkha which could not be put on it *for want of time*. There were charts, among them one showing where and in what countries Indian troops were used by British imperialism."

The agenda of the congress, in general terms, which was gone through in the five days of the congress, has been summed up by Nehru in his report thus: (1) Opening speeches (2) Imperialism and its consequences in the colonies and semicolonial countries. (3) Imperialism and the danger of war. (4) Cooperation between the national-liberation movements in oppressed countries and the labour and anti-imperialist movements in the imperialist countries. (5) Coordination of the national-emancipation movements with the labour movements of all countries, colonial as well as imperialist. (6) Establishment of a worldwide organisation linking up all the forces against imperialism and colonial oppression.

Jawaharlal Nehru was elected to the presidium and was one of those who made the opening speeches on 10 February, together with S. O. Davies, Fenner Brockway, Liau Han-sin and Sen Katayama. In this speech, he again emphasised the point of the use of Indian troops abroad: "I must remind you that Indian troops, unhappily to my

shame I confess it, have been utilised many times by the British in oppressing other people.”<sup>21</sup> Speaking as a representative of the Indian National Congress he emphasised the issue of complete independence which was not yet the accepted policy and creed of the Indian National Congress. He said: “We desire the fullest freedom for our country not only, of course, internally, but the freedom to develop such relations with our neighbours and other countries as we desire. It is because we think that this international congress affords us a chance of this co-operation that we welcome and greet it.”

The sessions on the 11th and 12th were devoted to further speeches and the introduction of the main documents on imperialism and the danger of war. The resolutions we have reproduced here came up on 13 and 14 February.

The resolution on India (Document 2) was read out to the congress by Jawaharlal Nehru who says that it was drafted by us”, i.e. by Indian delegates.<sup>22</sup>

This was followed by a joint declaration on behalf of the Indian and Chinese delegates which was moved by the head of the Chinese delegation Liau Han-sin. The text of the declaration produced here is taken from Bakar Ali Mirza’s article in *Modern Review* (Document 3).

The third item taken up on the same day was a declaration signed by the British, Indian and Chinese delegates, which Nehru characterises “as the most important and effective resolution of the three” (Document 4). The text printed here is also according to the *Modern Review* article referred to earlier. It was moved by the British delegate Beckett of the Labour Party. It was signed by Liau Han-sin (EC of Kuomintang), General Lei Tsung-lin (National Revolutionary Army) and by Hsing Kwang-sen (People’s government of Canton) for the Chinese delegation. For the British delegation, it was signed by G. Lansbury, Ellen Wilkinson, John Beckett

21. *Selected Works*, Vol 2, p 275.

22. *Inprecor*, 28 February 1927, p 528 and *Selected Works of J. Nehru*, Vol 2, p 284. Text produced here is Nehru’s report to AICC, *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1927, Vol 2, pp 155-56.

(all MPs), R. Bridgman, Fenner Brockway (ILP), W. Rust, A. MacManus, Harry Pollitt and S. O. Davies (Miners' Federation), John Stokes, Helen Crawford.<sup>23</sup> This resolution, Nehru emphasised, was meant to commit its sponsors, viz the British delegation, to fight for India's complete independence, to oppose war credits, to carry anti-imperialist propaganda among the soldiery, and it recommended "direct action and strikes to prevent movements of munitions and troops to India and China". Nehru said, "The resolution was really meant to bind the British signatories who are affected most by it but to some extent it binds me as the Indian signatory also. I trust the resolution will have a good effect on India in lessening the extraordinary mentality which clings on to the British connection in spite of everything and especially in regard to the army of occupation in India."<sup>24</sup>

Nehru was greatly interested in this resolution not only because it stressed complete independence and the withdrawal of all occupation forces of British imperialism from India and China, but also these issues were being keenly discussed in India and were to find their culmination in the adoption of the complete independence resolution in the Madras session of the Indian National Congress (December 1927). In his report to the working committee, he writes: "This resolution was sent by cable—at great cost—to the president of the Indian Congress and to the national government of Canton. I hope the Congress will approve of this resolution and will adopt it, if necessary, with some minor changes. It would largely fit in with the policy of the Swaraj Party in the councils and would give a welcome lead to the country in regard to outside action."<sup>25</sup>

A fourth resolution, one on Mesopotamia, was moved on the same day (13 February). Nehru records: "We felt that as no delegate from Mesopotamia was present and as Indian troops had conquered and were at present occupying Mesopotamia, and large numbers of Indian clerks and

23. Nehru, *Selected Works*, Vol 2, p 285.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

employees were taking part in the exploitation of the country, it was up to us demand the recall of the army of occupation and to say that we do not wish to be a party to this imperialist adventure, even though we may profit a little from the drippings of British exploitation."<sup>26</sup>

On the next day (14 February), as these resolutions and others so far moved were being adopted, a cable from Srinivas Iyengar was received by the congress of the League. Bakar Ali Mirza records: "As Mr Srinivas Iyengar's cable to the congress conveying India's greetings and condemnation of the use of Indian troops in China was read, a thrill and a cheer went through the hall. Happily, the cable arrived soon after Jawaharlalji had moved a similar resolution."<sup>27</sup>

Two more documents adopted on this day deserve special notice. The first is a resolution of the trade-union delegates at the Brussels congress (Document 5).

The manifesto of the Brussels Congress produced here (Document 6) focuses the attention on two issues, which dominated world politics in those days, viz the danger of an imperialist war and of a war against the USSR, and the rising struggles of the oppressed peoples of the world for national independence.

Perhaps there was no time to process the draft in detail and to consider amendments. This fact is probably reflected in Nehru's comment on the same: "One of these (documents) called the Congress Manifesto, a copy of which I enclose, is more or less Marxian and, although personally I have no very great objection to it, the manner of its being rushed through was objectionable."<sup>28</sup>

At the same time, it is important to note that the *Inprecor* special report records that all resolutions and declarations, including the Manifesto of the Congress, were unanimously adopted. When the proposal to form

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26. Ibid.

27. This was the "resolution presented by Jawaharlal Nehru on behalf of the Indian delegation demanding the withdrawal of Indian troops from Mesopotamia" (*Inprecor*, 26 February, 1927, p 238).

28. Nehru, *Selected Works*, Vol 2, p 286.

the World League against Imperialism was unanimously adopted, "the delegates rose spontaneously in their seats and sang the *Internationale* and joined with Fimmen in cheers for the international unity of the working class".

The report of the credentials committee was presented at the concluding session. *Inprecor* says: "The report showed that 174 delegates were present from 37 countries out of which 70 were delegates from European countries and from the United States of America."

Fimmen, from Holland, and the general secretary of the International Transport Workers, made the concluding remarks. In one of the earlier sessions he had reported on the "need of cooperation and coordination of the nationalist workers' movement". He had highlighted how imperialism exploited the workers of both capitalist and colonial countries. He had stated:

"Textile industries... are shifting from England to India. Unemployment in the mother countries was not the only consequence, but over and above that the workers are taxed to keep a colossal army of occupation in the colonies and this army is able to enforce labour conditions upon the workers there, conditions that are a disgrace to civilisation.

"To illustrate his thesis, Fimmen took the example of China and India and showed the dominant nature of foreign capital and also the inhuman conditions of work. Dividends in the jute industry, for example, went as high as 305 per cent (India). In China workers in some industries had to work 52 weeks a year with hardly a holiday. In India, men, women and children were working 60 hours a week on starvation wages. In the mines of India women took their children with them underground, deposited them on a piece of coal and drugged them with opium to keep them quiet while they worked. Many hardly saw the light of the day. These conditions are not human. The workers of the world must realise that they must cooperate with all the workers of the world—whether black, white, yellow or brown."<sup>29</sup>

While in session it received solidarity messages from the polit bureau of the National Army of China, from the British miners and from Madame Sun Yat-sen. The concluding session adopted the constitution of the League and elected an executive of nine members and four substitute members:

*Executive:* J. Nehru (India), Liau (China), Senghor (Africa), Mohammad Hata (Indonesia), Lansbury (Great Britain), Willi Muenzenberg (Germany), Marteaux (Belgium), Manuel Ugarte (South Africa) and Fimmen (Holland).

*Substitute Members:* Gibarti, Roger Baldwin (USA), Henri Barbusse and Reginald Bridgman.<sup>30</sup>

In his closing speech, Edo Fimmen said: "The congress was of first-rate importance. A world organisation has been created which would smash imperialism despite all hindrances. The enemy would do its utmost to slander the congress and term it a communist conspiracy. But nevertheless, it is necessary to say, without the Russian revolution, which awakened the oppressed peoples, this congress could never have been possible (stormy applause)." Thereafter all delegates rose from their seats and sang the *Internationale*. The congress was declared closed.<sup>31</sup>

The long report Nehru sent to the working committee of the Indian National Congress is a proof of the great importance he attached to this world organisation. He wrote:

"In oppressed countries... nationalism automatically and rightly takes precedence of all other sentiments. This is recognised even by socialists. But they point out that in such countries nationalism might be given a broader basis more in consonance with the tendencies of the age; that it might derive its strength from and work specially for the masses, the peasants and other workers. Personally, I agree with the contention because I accept in its

30. The entire presidium of the congress was made the general council with five presidents: Einstein, Romain Rolland, Madame Sun Yat-sen, Lansbury and J. Nehru (J. Nehru's report: *Selected Works*, Vol 2, p 286)

31. *Inprecor* special report, op cit.

fundamentals the socialist theory of the state. I do not know, however, how far the Indian Congress would be prepared to identify itself with socialism. I may point out, however, that the association of the Indian Congress with the League against Imperialism does not mean the adoption by the Congress of a socialist program. The Congress is and remains entirely free to work along such lines as it considers best suited for the country.”<sup>32</sup>

Further he strongly argued against the Russian bogey: “The mere fact that English politicians are never tired of showing that the Russians are monsters, need not frighten us from associating with them where it is manifestly to our advantage to do so. In so far as we are up against British imperialism, we must recognise that Soviet Russia is also very much against it.”

In conclusion, he called upon the working committee to associate the Indian National Congress with the League against Imperialism and suggested “that a first contribution of £ 100 be made and more might be sent later”. He sent the entire proceedings of the congress, when they reached him in Switzerland later, to the AICC office and suggested to the secretary that “considerable publicity be given to this material... Lansbury’s (speech) is certainly worth reproducing. Pollitt’s also is good and others from South Africa and America and other countries... are sure to interest Indians and give them a wider outlook.”<sup>33</sup>

Apart from the two joint India-China declarations at the congress, there were important joint consultations between the two delegations. Nehru devotes a considerable part of his report to the working committee to the results of these consultations.<sup>34</sup> The conclusions of these consultations were put down by Nehru in a ‘confidential’ “Memorandum on Indo-Chinese cooperation for the information of the Chinese delegates”. This document, which is dated 14 February 1927, is in the records of the League congress. But it is not printed in Nehru’s *Selected Works*

32. *Selected Works*, Vol 2, p 287.

33. *Ibid*, p 313: Letter to Rangaswami, dated 16 March 1927.

34 *Ibid*, pp 291-97.

probably because all the points are later included by in his report to the working committee.

In this memorandum, Nehru says: "It is, therefore, desirable that our cooperation should not merely be based on the exigencies of the present situation, important as it is, but should envisage the continuation of this struggle, however long it may last, and should be established on a firm basis of a lasting friendship between these two great peoples." Despite difficulties of the situation in India, Nehru says something can be done in India to help the Chinese movement.

The Congress volunteer organisation, Hindustani Seva Dal, of N. S. Hardikar, was in those days proposing to send an ambulance corps to China. Nehru eagerly welcomed this proposal. In a letter to N. S. Hardikar dated 8 March 1927 he wrote: "I have read your letter to Goswami in *Forward* regarding the raising of a contingent of the Hindustani Seva Dal for ambulance work in China. I am very glad you have made a proposal of this kind. It is up to us to do something practical for China... I do hope that the all-India board of the Dal will decide on something effective."<sup>35</sup>

The last document in this section is a resolution on India adopted by the general council of the League in its sessions from 9 to 11 December 1927 (Document 7). In this connection it would be useful to record the developments in the League itself and in its relations to India and other countries.

The first meeting of the executive committee of the League was held on 29 and 30 March 1927 in Amsterdam and Jawaharlal Nehru attended it. He submitted a report on this to the working committee of the Indian National Congress on 4 April 1927. The session, Nehru records, was devoted mainly to questions of organisation. The executive appointed a subcommittee of Lansbury, Fimmen and Nehru to consider the location of the League secretariat—London, Brussels, Amsterdam and Berlin being the alternatives.

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35. *Ibid*, p 304.

The second question decided was the status of an 'associated' organisation as distinct from an affiliated organisation of the League. Associated organisation was defined as one "which at least partly agreed with the program and activities and were prepared to cooperate to that extent". Reporting this to the working committee, Nehru says, "I pressed for this rule chiefly in the interest of the Indian Congress and I felt the Congress can take advantage of it without in any way committing itself to anything it does not approve of."<sup>36</sup>

It appears, in those days, Gandhiji got the "wrong impression" that Nehru was overestimating the "utility of the League against Imperialism". Warding off that impression, Nehru emphasised the need for international association thus: "I do not think it is desirable nor indeed it is possible for India to plough a lonely furrow now or in the future. It is solely with a view to selfeducation and selfimprovement that I desire external contacts. I am afraid we are terribly narrow in our outlook and the sooner we get rid of this outlook, the better. Our salvation can, of course, come only from the internal strength—but one of the methods of evolving such strength should be study of other people and their ideas."<sup>37</sup>

Jawaharlal Nehru's report to the AICC on the Brussels congress of the League against Imperialism and his notes to the working committee had the desired effect. The AICC meeting in Bombay in the third week of May 1927 passed the following resolution: "AICC records the report of Jawaharlal Nehru, the representative of the Indian National Congress at the international congress of the League against Imperialism held at Brussels in February last and expresses its high appreciation of his service at the congress.

"AICC resolves to recommend to the Congress to give support to the League as an associate organisation" making it clear in parenthesis that an associate organisation

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36. *Ibid*, p 322.

37. *Ibid*, p 326: Letter to Gandhiji, London, dated 22 April 1927.

does not agree wholly with the program and activities of the League).

On the Chinese situation, the AICC session passed the following resolution: "The AICC conveys to the Chinese people its fullest sympathy for the struggle for independence they are carrying on and condemns the action of the British government in dispatching Indian and other troops to China."

It also adopted another resolution regarding China. "AICC accepts the proposal of Hindustani Seva Dal to send an ambulance corps to China and asks the Dal to start all preparations for the same." The resolution was moved by Dr Ansari and was unanimously accepted. The ambulance corps was to proceed under the leadership of Shoaib Qureshi and it was estimated that to cover its cost over one lakh rupees will have to be raised.<sup>38</sup>

The AICC also sanctioned that £100 be paid to the League as the contribution of the Indian National Congress as associate member. This we learn from Nehru's letter to the AICC secretary (7 September 1927) in which he is reporting about the next meeting of the league executive held in Cologne on 20-21 August 1927. This session which was devoted to internal organisation was faced with the resignation of Lansbury, the chairman of the executive, who as Nehru says, succumbed to the pressure of the rightwing Labour Party leadership which from the beginning was hostile to the League. Fenner Brockway, the ILP leader, was elected in his place. The meeting decided to hold the general council meeting of the League in November in Paris.<sup>39</sup>

This meeting of the general council of the League actually took place in Brussels and from 9 to 11 December 1927. This is clear from the *Information Bulletin* of the League found in the search of R. S. Nimbkar and later produced in the Meerut case (P. 1794). The last document of this session "Resolution on India" is a part

38. *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1927, vol 1, p 22.

39. *Selected Works*, vol 2, pp 329-32.

of the bulletin. Jawaharlal Nehru was not present at the general council meeting of the League having left for India already on 2 December 1927. But from the record of the League proceedings we learn that Motilal Nehru, who was in England on professional business from August 1927 to February 1928, attended the meeting and spoke there.

It is necessary to go back to the August meeting of the executive of the League. In this meeting, Shapurji Saklatvala was present by invitation.<sup>40</sup> From the League record, we learn that Jawaharlal Nehru made a statement in this meeting that there was no party in India with a definite objective of "complete independence". This was challenged both by Saklatvala and Chattopadhyaya. Jawaharlal Nehru replied, "I said there is no organised party which has a definite or an indefinite name, saying that we want complete independence (interruption: What about Workers' and Peasants' Party of India?). There is no such thing as a Workers' and Peasants' Party of India. There is a section which calls itself Communist Party of India. Mr Saklatvala can tell you more about it than I can."

Motilal Nehru had this discussion in mind when he spoke in the League general council meeting in December. Stressing that the National Congress was not an affiliated body of the League, he said: "At the last meeting of the AICC a resolution was passed approving of the association of the Congress with the League. Whether the Congress as a whole is to be associated with the League is a matter yet to be decided. I hope the delegates' assembly in Madras will be only too pleased to sanction the association of the Congress with this League."

Continuing, Motilal Nehru said: "You are all aware that the Congress is a platform upon which all opinions meet. There are those who aspire for freedom within the British empire and there are those who wish to work for freedom and independence without the British empire. The Congress makes it possible for both these sides to come

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40. *Ibid.*, p 321.

upon the same platform. Mr Gandhi says that when we say 'swaraj' and independence for India, it means independence within the empire, if possible, and without the British empire, if necessary."

Stressing the point that the Congress was neither socialist, nor communist nor bolshevik and was fighting for country's liberation by methods as are congenial to the genius of the people, he said: "India can no longer remain isolated. India is a part of the world and it is up to India to strive for her freedom. But she must also get into touch with the other nations of the world so that they know and feel the spirit of the movement in India. It is on these grounds that we welcome association with this congress which represents so many countries of the world."

Referring to the situation in India, Motilal Nehru naturally referred to the Simon commission, which was announced on 15 November 1927. On the very next day Srinivas Iyengar, president of the Indian National Congress, had issued a statement that the Congress would boycott the commission. Motilal Nehru had also sent a telegram to Lansbury saying: "Nothing short of full responsible government can satisfy India." Condemning the gross betrayal of the Labour Party, Motilal Nehru said "We have faith in noncooperation. We will boycott the commission. Aga Khan says he will persuade the ministers to cooperate. But I say 'No responsible party in India will have anything to do with the commission.'"

In conclusion he made pointed reference to the danger of war. He said: "Put India and China on their feet and then who is going to fight what—who is going to care for the great waterways and land routes which converge on India?... In the independence of India lies the safety of the world. I conclude with the hope that the Indian National Congress will pass a resolution confirming what the committee has done."

The resolution on India adopted by the general council was in the spirit of Motilal Nehru's speech but it also showed the way forward.

## III

## SHAPURJI SAKLATVALA IN INDIA

The visit and the lecture-tour in India of Shapurji Saklatvala—a communist and a member of the British parliament, from the third week of January to the end of the first week of April was a significant political development of the year. It contributed significantly to the consistent anti-imperialist and democratic leftwing trend which was growing in the national movement then and to the growth of a militant trade-union and peasant movement under the red flag, which was rising as an organised mass base of that left wing.

His speeches in general public meetings, in workers' meetings and in youth and students' meetings held in Bombay, Ahmedabad, Calcutta, Delhi, Lahore and Madras were reported prominently in the nationalist press. They served to focus the attention of the politically-minded public on the two points mentioned above. Indian communists, through the upcoming workers' and peasants' parties, were also concentrating their propaganda and mass work on these very two aspects of the national freedom movement.

His dialogue with Mahatma Gandhi, which took the form of an open correspondence, on the problems of the national freedom movement and on the unity of the trade-union movement was printed in full in nationalist daily press, also served the same purpose. Finally, in his intervention in the seventh session of the All India Trade Union Congress held in Delhi from 12 to 13 March, he gave fruitful suggestions of an organisational nature, based on his own practical experience of trade-union movement in England, including the work of organising Indian seamen there.

Saklatvala was born in the rich industrialist family of the Tatas on 28 March 1874 (date given in his passport application).<sup>41</sup> From his youth he was inspired by humani-

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41. Cf: *Shapurji Saklatvala*, by Panchanan Saha, PPH, 1970.

tarian, patriotic and nationalistic ideals. In 1890 we find him active in plague relief work in Bombay. In 1904 as a 30-year-old educated young man, we find him cooperating with his uncle Jamshetji Tata, who at that time was planning to set up an iron and steel works in India.

In 1905 Saklatvala was sent to London as a Tata representative. In those early days of labour movement Saklatvala combined his business duties for the Tata company with his labour activities. In 1910 he joined the ILP. He was tremendously influenced by the October socialist revolution in Russia and we find him joining the "People's Russian Information Bureau" which was supplying to British public truthful information about what was happening in revolutionary Russia. In 1921 we find Saklatvala joining the newly-founded Communist Party of Great Britain.<sup>42</sup> He was elected to the British parliament from North Battersea in 1922 and reelected in 1924 and remained a member till 1929.

Saklatvala's campaign of meetings in India between January and April 1927 proceeded under the auspices of the Indian National Congress and other public organisations. Saklatvala, as we have seen, did not want his meetings organised only under communist auspices but on a broader basis, and it served the cause better in the circumstances then. In Bombay, his meetings were organised by the Trade Union Congress, by the BPCC (K. N. Joglekar was secretary of the BPCC then and also an AICC member) and there was also a reception committee composed of congressmen, communists and others. In Ahmedabad the reception was organised by the Congress and Vallabhbhai Patel himself garlanded him. In Calcutta a broad reception committee composed of congress leaders and leftists was organised. Nationalist minded municipal corporations as in Madras and Calcutta gave him official reception. The Bombay corporation gave a tea-party in

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42. *Communism in India—1924-1927* by David Petrie of the GOI's intelligence bureau gives details of his life from 1905 to 1927. See "Who's Who" on p 368.

his honour in the Hanging Garden. He also visited Poona, Kanpur, Delhi, Bangalore, etc.

Through his speeches and writings while in India he gave a clarion call to the national movement, to turn to an active and militant organisation of the masses of peasants and workers, to give up illusions about dominion status, to stand for complete independence of the country and to come forward with a concrete program of militant and democratic demands of the masses. At a time when the national politics of the country was moving left, when the left wing was pressing for "complete independence" in place of dominion status within the British empire as national objective, when it was demanding a militant form of national mass struggle in which class actions of workers and peasants will be playing leading role, Saklatvala's speeches and particularly his correspondence with Gandhiji, widely published through the daily press in India, played a great role in strengthening this leftwing tendency.

"Gandhi and Labour Organisation" the first in this section is a comment in the *Masses* of June 1927 on an aspect of Gandhi-Saklatvala correspondence (Document 8). Using that part of the correspondence which dealt with the question of trade unions, it exposes the class-collaborationist character of Gandhi's Majur Mahajan.

Next (Document 9) comes "India and Britain"— which Saklatvala wrote as soon as he returned to England and which was published in the *Labour Monthly* of June 1927. It was also an exhibit in the Meerut conspiracy case (P 703). Here he warns the British worker that he can no longer afford to be indifferent to the imperialist industrialisation of India.

The third document is a brief comment in *Kranti*, the Marathi weekly organ of the Bombay Workers' and Peasants' Party, dated 10 September 1927 (Document 10). It is a protest against the cancellation of the Indian visa of Saklatvala by the British government when he wanted to come again to India to attend the Madras session of the Indian National Congress in December 1927. This issue attracted considerable public attention and R. S. Nimbkar

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42. *Communism in India—1924-1927* by David Petrie of the GOI's intelligence bureau gives details of his life from 1905 to 1927. See "Who's Who" on p 368.

his honour in the Hanging Garden. He also visited Poona, Kanpur, Delhi, Bangalore, etc.

Through his speeches and writings while in India he gave a clarion call to the national movement, to turn to an active and militant organisation of the masses of peasants and workers, to give up illusions about dominion status, to stand for complete independence of the country and to come forward with a concrete program of militant and democratic demands of the masses. At a time when the national politics of the country was moving left, when the left wing was pressing for "complete independence" in place of dominion status within the British empire as national objective, when it was demanding a militant form of national mass struggle in which class actions of workers and peasants will be playing leading role, Saklatvala's speeches and particularly his correspondence with Gandhiji, widely published through the daily press in India, played a great role in strengthening this leftwing tendency.

"Gandhi and Labour Organisation" the first in this section is a comment in the *Masses* of June 1927 on an aspect of Gandhi-Saklatvala correspondence (Document 8). Using that part of the correspondence which dealt with the question of trade unions, it exposes the class-collaborationist character of Gandhi's Major Mahajan.

Next (Document 9) comes "India and Britain"— which Saklatvala wrote as soon as he returned to England and which was published in the *Labour Monthly* of June 1927. It was also an exhibit in the Meerut conspiracy case (P 703). Here he warns the British worker that he can no longer afford to be indifferent to the imperialist industrialisation of India.

The third document is a brief comment in *Kranti*, the Marathi weekly organ of the Bombay Workers' and Peasants' Party, dated 10 September 1927 (Document 10). It is a protest against the cancellation of the Indian visa of Saklatvala by the British government when he wanted to come again to India to attend the Madras session of the Indian National Congress in December 1927. This issue attracted considerable public attention and R. S. Nimbkar

moved a protest resolution in the Calcutta session of the AICC on 30 October 1927.<sup>43</sup> The resolution was unanimously adopted and later at the Madras session, it figured in an official resolution which "condemned the action of the British government in cancelling the Indian visa of Mr Shapurji Saklatvala and thereby preventing him from visiting his native country and making him an exile". It further paid tributes to him in the following words:

"The Congress records its appreciation of the courage with which Mr Saklatvala has consistently stood for the freedom of India in spite of the opposition and difficulties he had to face in a hostile chamber where there was no second person to support him."<sup>44</sup>

But before he left, he attended the 7th session of the AITUC on 12 and 13 March in Delhi, and in his speech expressed his views on the question of trade-union organisation. He had also arranged to meet the communists in Delhi. He had sent a telegram to K. N. Joglekar from Calcutta: "Yourself, Shah, Ghate, Mirajkar, Bhakta, Bagerhatta, Mukund Desai, consult and take prompt action organise fourteenth March—Karl Marx anniversary—ask Hasrat Mohani preside—also ask Gopinath Singh, Muzaffar Ahmad cooperate without sulking—I know now general situation India and proper place for communists."<sup>45</sup>

This meeting took place on 14 and 15 March 1927. *The Annual Report of the CPI (1927)* records: 'Subsequently we were called to Delhi by Comrade Saklatvala, who had considerably changed his attitude by that time. At Delhi, the whole matter was discussed with Saklatvala who agreed with us on the necessity of having a communist party in India.'

Saklatvala's main advice to the Indian communists was: Build militant organisations of workers and peasants as your independent mass base, but at the same time work inside the Indian National Congress to build a left wing there. The writer of these lines remembers how in 1928

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43. *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1927, Vol 2, p 32.

44. *Ibid*, pp 381-82.

45. *Meerut Record*, P 1143.

on the eve of his returning to India, V. Chattopadhyaya asked him to meet Saklatvala who was then in Berlin. He looked at the young man from head to foot and said: "Don't believe all that M. N. Roy writes and says. It is true the Bombay textile strike lasted 6 months. But that does not mean the revolution is round the corner. Indian communists have to carry forward the good work but at the same time work inside the Congress."

## IV

## WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' PARTY IN BOMBAY AND CALCUTTA ETC.

The emergence of the Workers' and Peasants' Party in Bombay was more or less similar to that in Bengal. It was a small group of leftwing radicals and communists who took the initiative for the formation of the party. In the secretary's report of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, Bombay, presented to its first annual conference in early 1928, we find the following: "The nucleus of this party was a small congress group, which decided to form a party, advocating a policy not represented by any party existing at present. It first met on 26 November 1926 and styled (itself) as *Congress Labour Party*. Subsequently, however, it was decided to take the name of the Workers' and Peasants' Party (13 February 1927)."<sup>46</sup>

There is the draft constitution of the Congress Labour Party in the record of the Meerut case.<sup>47</sup> It was "seized" from the office of Workers' and Peasants' Party of Bombay on 20 March 1929. This draft constitution is purely organisational, laying down how the "labour group" organise itself inside the Congress for the "objectives" of the CLP which were defined as (1) capture of the Congress, (2) the establishment of a federated republic of India based on adult suffrage. This was rather a crude way of going about the objective. Those who had taken the ini-

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46. Meerut Record, P 826.

47. Ibid, P 1354(4).

tiative to form the group soon realised this and the CEC of the CPI in its January (1927) meeting adopted, as we have seen, a "Resolution on the need to organise a Workers' and Peasants' Party". This was an innerparty resolution of the communists. Meanwhile the CLP continued to function.

Towards the end of January, the secretary of the CLP received a letter from the League against Colonial Oppression to send a delegate to the first congress of the League against Imperialism and for National Independence.<sup>48</sup> On 26 January 1927 we find S. S. Mirajkar, secretary of the CLP, writing to Thengdi: "We are starting the work of the new party in right earnest."<sup>49</sup> A little later we find a circular letter from the secretary, CLP, and the first point on the agenda is "change of name". This meeting took place and a brief report of the proceedings and its decisions appeared in the *Bombay Chronicle* (24 February 1927). This is the first document in this section. This press cutting was seized from the Workers' and Peasants' Party office in Bombay and produced in the Meerut case (Document 11). This is the press summary of the main document adopted in the inaugural meeting held on 13 February 1927.

The second document entitled "The Workers' and Peasants' Party" is the program document adopted (Document 12). Comparing it with the resolution adopted by the CEC of the CPI a month earlier, we find that the two correspond with each other para by para. The program part also is identical. The Workers' and Peasants' Party document gives the names of the office-bearers of the executive committee elected at the meeting.

The objective of forming the party and its relation to the Indian National Congress is clearly stated in para 6: Firstly, it is an independent political party to be based on the class organisation of workers and peasants. Secondly, it also works inside the National Congress to form a left wing there. Thirdly, for the fight for complete

48. *Ibid*, P 1355 (d).

49. *Ibid*, P 385.

national independence it seeks to form a broad anti-imperialist front. Fourthly, its own ultimate objective is swaraj which will be socialism.

Examining the list of office-bearers, we find that all of them were members of the Congress Labour Party of Bombay which elected them. Only S. V. Ghate, R. S. Nimbkar and K. N. Joglekar were members of the CEC of the CPI elected at the Kanpur communist conference in 1925. K. N. Joglekar and R. S. Nimbkar as well as Dhundiraj Thengdi were members of the AICC from Bombay. Jhabvala was beginning his career as a trade-unionist. Lalji Pendse was later to be associated with the Girni Kamgar Union and J. B. Patel dropped out of the movement soon afterwards. The point to be noted is that except the three mentioned above, none were members of the CPI at the time. S. S. Mirajkar joined up at the end of the year and others never joined.

- The constitution adopted by the party, together with the program is a separate document and is available in the Meerut case documents.<sup>50</sup> This was seized in the search of the party office in Bombay in the course of the Meerut case searchers (20 March 1929). The constitution deals mainly with organisation, but the following points in it are worthy of note and confirm what we have said above. Article 2 defines Object thus: "To establish swaraj (complete national independence) wherein the means of production, distribution and exchange are publicly owned and socially controlled." In article 3, defining membership, conditions and the procedure, there is a further clause—"Membership to the Indian National Congress is considered highly recommendatory." The executive of the party is composed of president, secretary, executive members, treasurer and group-leaders.

It is interesting to record here that in M. N. Roy's *Masses of India* issued from abroad there is an article: "The Workers' and Peasants' Party".<sup>51</sup> In the course of

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50. Ibid, P 847.

51. *The Masses of India*, April 1927.

this article an analysis of the Indian national movement led by the Congress and the Indian labour movement led by the reformist trade-unionists is first made. About the first it says: "Today the National Congress is in the hands of a relatively small group of bourgeois politicians who use it as a bargaining weapon in negotiating a settlement with imperialism. The gandhist noncooperators are equally as bankrupt as the swarajist semicooperators... The socalled Congress Party is discredited because it cannot be trusted to voice the aspirations of the workers and peasants." As for the labour movement, the article points out that while the AITUC is dominated by reformist leadership, "the emergence of the revolutionary left wing in the trade unions shows that the fight for militancy has begun".

Proceeding further the article says: "The revolutionary national-emancipation movement directed against imperialism and for national independence requires the combined action of several classes and can be organised on a wider basis. The two struggles, that of the subject nation for its national independence and that of the proletariat and peasantry for freedom from economic exploitation, are, of course, closely interconnected, as the experience of China has demonstrated on a gigantic scale. Before the national-revolutionary united front can be organised, it is necessary that the revolutionary nature of the struggle should be understood and the role to be played in it by the revolutionary mass movement. The first step towards the national-revolutionary party is the infusing of a militant spirit into the nationalist movement. That in itself involves cooperation with the revolutionary movement of the workers and peasants."

The article defines the task of the Workers' and Peasants' Party thus: "At the present stage, the fight for a militant nationalist and labour movement is the immediate requirement in India. The fight for militancy needs to be waged both in the field of nationalist organisation and the field of workers' and peasants' organisations. This is the special function that can be fulfilled by the Workers' and Peasants' Party. It is not itself the party of na-

tional revolution aiming at leadership of national struggle, nor is it the international class party of the proletariat. It is somewhat in the nature of an organised left wing which will endeavour to secure the adoption of a militant program of mass action by the existing organisations and to build up the mass movement in an organised manner on that basis... The Workers' and Peasants' Party will, on the one hand, strengthen the forces of the left in the national movement and on the other hand it will prepare the way for a powerful class leadership of the revolutionary workers and peasants. It must have a mass following or it will be of no avail."

M. N. Roy's journal correctly formulates the twofold task of the newly-formed Workers' and Peasants' Party, but he was simultaneously putting forward the perspective of building the national revolutionary party as a parallel to or in place of the Indian National Congress which he thinks is practically politically dead. The Indian comrades working in the practical field, as well as George Allison (Donald Campbell) and the newly-arrived Philip Spratt who were working with them do not seem to have accepted the perspective. The Workers' and Peasants' Party, as we have seen, both in Bengal and in Bombay, was by its constitution and program working both inside the Indian National Congress, to form a revolutionary left wing within it, as well as outside it as an independent party to build class organisations of workers and peasants and to lead their struggles.

One of the first things which the Bombay Workers' and Peasants' Party did after its formation in February 1927 was to put forward before the AICC, which was holding its session in Bombay on 5 May, a program of action (Document 13), though its members in that body, viz K. N. Joglekar and R. S. Nimbkar. K. N. Joglekar got it printed at the Advocate of India Press and its copies were sent to all AICC members in advance, with a covering letter signed by S. S. Mirajkar, secretary, on 24 April 1927. The program reproduced here is a copy of the original document seized from the Workers' and Peasants' Party office in Bombay and later put up in the Meerut case. K. N. Jogi-



*Krantि*, 14 May 1927, which published the program of the WPP for the National Congress.

lekar in his statement before the court said: 'P 843... is a copy of my resolution at the Gauhati congress, which with minor changes I submitted to the AICC that met in Bombay on May 1927..."

The significance of this resolution is that the Workers' and Peasants' Party through its two members on the AICC put forward the slogan of complete independence with the concrete socioeconomic program before the Indian National Congress, when it still stood for dominion status and when pressure was being built up for the acceptance of the goal of complete independence at the Madras congress which was to take place six months later

Secondly, it calls upon the Congress to take up these demands of the masses and come forward to build up a militant national organisation.

Thirdly, it puts forward the goal of preparing the country for enforcing mass sanctions against imperialism in the form of mass civil disobedience movement and a general strike of workers in all strategic and key industries.

The program was published in the *Kranti*, the newly-started Marathi weekly organ of the Workers' and Peasants' Party (Bombay), in its second issue dated 14 May 1927. The text was published under the banner headline: "What should Congress do? It should accept the program of the Workers' and Peasants' Party—the platform of the minimum demands of the toiling and common people of the country" (Document 14).

The *Masses* from abroad, dealt with the program in its issue of June 1927 in the article headed "The National Congress Program". This article mentions that the program was taken note of by the premier nationalist daily of Bombay, the *Bombay Chronicle*. The paper commented: 'The only method of pushing the congress movement ahead is to reconstruct its program on the broad lines of uniting all national forces for joint action in the legislatures and of enlisting the active cooperation of the peasants' and workers' organisations for work outside them. In so far as the new party seeks the reorientation of the Congress on these lines, we ungrudgingly accord our support"

The nationalist daily's support to the program of the Workers' and Peasants' Party is significant and understandable in terms of the leftward swing of the nationalist public opinion in 1927. The *Masses* in the article referred to above criticises the paper for supporting the joint action of all nationalist forces, including those working in the legislatures. It said: "Let the bourgeois congress-wallahs desert the Congress if they wish and let the revolutionary nationalists help the workers and peasants." The same article had stated: "The time has come for the petty bourgeoisie to sever themselves from the leading strings of the bourgeoisie and to come out boldly as the champions of the masses. Only in that way can the prestige and power of the Congress be built up."

The tactical perspective which M. N. Roy's *Masses* was putting forward before the national revolutionaries and the communists was that they either work for the expulsion of the compromising bourgeois leadership from the Congress and capture it or build another anti-imperialist organisation parallel and rival to the Congress. Earlier we have shown how Roy's *Future of Indian Politics* and also to a certain extent R. P. Dutt's *Modern India* had put forward this perspective based on the theory that the bourgeoisie heading the national movement in India had gone over to imperialism; at the same time we had shown the R. P. Dutt's *Modern India* had a distinctly different tactical approach leaving the door open for working through the Congress.

K. N. Joglekar, in the course of his statement before the Meerut court, has referred to the program as almost identical with the one he had moved at the Gauhati session of the Congress and which he had submitted to the AICC in Bombay in May 1927 as a new resolution, says that at the session itself he was not allowed to move the resolution.

The next document is the "Moharrum Manifesto of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, Bombay" (Document 15). The moharrum of the year 1927 fell on 1 July and this manifesto was issued some time at the end of June. The text produced here is from the Meerut Record. It was

seized from the house of Abdul Majid when he was arrested in the Meerut case. Abdul Majid, as we have seen, was a muhajir like Shaukat Usmani who became a communist and was arrested and convicted in the Peshawar conspiracy case. After his release, he had started working in the trade unions and was soon to issue an Urdu weekly *Mehnatkash* (Toiler). In June he had come to Bombay to consult with comrades and had carried a copy of the manifesto with him. It has not been possible to trace whether it was published in *Kranti* (Marathi) or in *Mehnatkash* (Urdu) or as a pamphlet in one or both of these languages. The main point it makes in its appeal to the hindu and muslim toiling masses is, not be drawn into "communal movements...which the dreamers of pan-thik or pan-muslim swaraj... aspire to kindle on a countrywide scale" and to stand together as "one homogeneous mass of oppressed and exploited".

It would be convenient to sum up the activities of the Workers' and Peasants' Party (Bombay) in 1927. In the annual report submitted to its first annual conference in the beginning of 1928, the following facts are given:

"Party members were more or less connected with the Textile Workers' Union (Girni Kamgar Maha Mandal), the GIP General Employees' Union and directly responsible for the Municipal Workers' Union, and the Dock Workers' Union. The trade-union section (of the party) had to deal with two textile strikes in Bombay (in two individual mills).

"The party organised the following meetings: Lenin Day (22 January), Welcome to Saklatvala (February), Welcome to S. A. Dange (on his release—24 May), First ever May Day in Bombay, Welcome to Shaukat Usmani on his release (July), 10th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution (7 November), and the protest meeting against the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti in USA.

"Party organ *Kranti* (Marathi) began publication on 7 May and continued till September when P Spratt and S. S. Mirajkar were arrested in the India-China pamphlet case."

Meanwhile further developments were taking place in



the Peasants' and Workers' Party of Bengal. The second conference of this party was held in Calcutta on 19 and 20 February 1927 under the presidency of Atulchandra Gupta, when an address of welcome was given to Saklatvala. About 40 members and some 300 visitors were present. A new program of demands and organisation was adopted.

This program is exactly similar to the program adopted by the Workers' and Peasants' Party (Bombay) at about the same time. It puts forward the same final goal, as well as the same set of immediate demands. It formulates the same twofold aims of the party. The original of this document is a Bengali leaflet issued from Calcutta by Soumyendranath Tagore who was its secretary then and distributed to the public.

An article under the heading "The New Party" by Muzaffar Ahmad appeared in *Ganavani*, the Bengali weekly organ of the party, on 14 April 1927 in which an appeal is made to those of the lower middle class "who incline to a policy of revolutionary terrorism" to join the party of revolutionary mass action based on the organisation of workers and peasants (Document 16). *Ganavani* as we have seen, started as the successor of *Langal* on 12 August 1926 with Muzaffar Ahmad as editor and had ceased publication on 12 October 1926. It was restarted on 14 April 1927 and continued to appear up to 27 October and then stopped for lack of funds.

In the middle 1927, Soumyendranath Tagore, who was a secretary of the Peasants' and Workers' Party in Bengal, left for Germany and later went to Moscow, where in August he submitted a "Report on the Peasants' and Workers' Party of Bengal". Muzaffar Ahmad mentions that Soumyendranath went to Europe in 1927 with the help of Nalini Gupta. He also states that Soumyendranath before leaving did not give up the secretary's post but took a long leave.<sup>52</sup> Muzaffar admits that Soumyendranath was a member of the Communist Party but he had no

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52. *Myself and the CPI*, pp 428, 481 & 482.

mandate to appear as a delegate of the party at the sixth congress of the CI. But Muzaffar Ahmad did not know, or has not mentioned in his reminiscences and his other writings the fact that Soumyendranath submitted the abovementioned report as "secretary and mandated delegate of the Peasants' and Workers' Party of Bengal".

One may note here certain additional facts about the Peasants' and Workers' Party in Bengal in the first half of 1927 which are given in the report which is dated 1 August 1927. It says that Qutbuddin Ahmad and Soumyendranath started propaganda and organisational work among the jute workers. "Unions were formed of which the most noteworthy is the Bengal Jute Workers' Association at Kakinara which owes its origin and the present state of development to the work of Kalidas Bhattacharya. It had 4000 members and had opened a cooperative store for its members and established four night schools. It took up the cases of workers against the millowners and had in many cases been successful in compelling the mill-owners to give reasonable compensation for bodily injury sustained by workers during work." Tagore mentions two difficulties in organising the jute mill workers in Bengal. Firstly, the language difficulty as the workers came from different provinces and spoke different languages. Secondly, they do not permanently settle down in the industrial area and in most cases go back to their farms during the harvest. He says: "These two conditions are peculiar to Bengal. In Bombay and Madras there is a settled proletariat and there the language difficulty is almost non-existent. He also mentions a union of paper mill workers, a fishermen's union and some work done by Aftab Ali in organising a national seamen's union. He further mentions work among the hotel workers and municipal workers taken up by Abdur Razzak Khan, the officiating general secretary of the party.

Giving some account of the work among the peasants, he says that district conferences of the peasants of Nadia and Bogra were held and also a fishermen's conference attended by 4000. He describes the difficulty the party faced in running their organs first *Langal* and then *Ganavani*.

He says he was elected the general secretary of the PWP of Bengal in its conference held in March 1927.

Describing work in other provinces he gives the following additional information.

"The comrades of Lahore (Punjab) have started a paper called *Mehnatkash* with Darveshi as its editor.

"In Madras, the Labour Kisan Sabha is working on similar lines as the Peasants' and Workers' Party. In Madras, organisational work has been particularly successful among the workers of the Burma Oil Company who recently carried through a very successful strike (Krishnaswamy) Iyengar, and Singaravelu Chettiar have done a lot of work in this direction." He refers to "two of our most active workers" being arrested in Bengal "under an old repressive law dating from 1818".

Soumyendranath's report ends with the following paragraph: "The executive committee of the Peasants' and Workers' Party of Bengal has authorised me to approach the executive committee of the Communist International for support and guidance in our work. I carry a mandate to this effect and I have arrived in Moscow for this purpose."

A workers' and peasants' party also emerged in Rajasthan, led by Arjunlal Sethi, who was present in the communist conference in Kanpur (1925). In Punjab no workers' and peasants' party had emerged in 1927 but the Naujawan Bharat Sabha was formed in Lahore. *Kirti* (Worker), a Punjabi monthly started by Santokh Singh—a Gadar Party leader, was coming out regularly since February 1926 from Amritsar. In 1927, after the death of Santokh Singh, Sohan Singh Josh became its editor. This monthly was to become the organ of the Workers' and Peasants' Party in the Punjab next year. Abdul Majid had started *Mehnatkash*, an Urdu weekly from Lahore.

The emergence of the workers' and peasants' parties in Bengal and Bombay, the beginning of militant trade-union work in Bombay and Bengal, and the publication of *Ganavani*, *Kranti*, *Kirti* and *Mehnatkash* was a turningpoint in the workingclass movement in India and the

precursor of the great upsurge of the red-flag movement which was to begin next year. British imperialists were quick to take note of this. In their official annual report *India in 1926-27* they recorded that the visible result of communist activity was the formation of workers' and peasants' parties in Bombay and Calcutta, which they attributed to the appearance in India of George Allison (alias Donald Campbell) and to the arrival of Philip Spratt in December 1926 and also to the visit of Saklatvala which they said was a notable event in the history of the communist movement in India. About the *Kirti*, this annual said, "a new feature has been the alliance of the Soviet with the disappointed sikhs in America, China and in India. These latter intrigues have already accounted for the appearance in Amritsar of a monthly Gurmukhi magazine entitled *Kirti*."<sup>53</sup>

## V

SEVENTH SESSION OF THE AITUC AND  
THE FIRST BN RAILWAY STRIKE

The seventh session of the AITUC was held in Delhi on 12 and 13 March 1927. It was a small session, though trade-union representatives of the main industrial centres of India had assembled there. It was the first session of that organisation in which the left wing led by the communists, who were now functioning through the Workers' and Peasants' Party, appeared in some strength. Shapurji Saklatvala was present and spoke at the session and made useful suggestions. S. V. Ghate was elected as assistant secretary. Anti-imperialism, international solidarity and militant assertion of the basic demands of the working class were the keynotes of the resolutions adopted.

*Masses of India* devoted a long article to the session in its issue of May 1927 (Vol 3, No 5). The article in *Inpre-*

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53. *India in 1926-27*, pp 288-90.

cor was written by Balabushevich (Vol 7, No 34). *Labour Monthly* (London) gave a brief one-page report (July 1927). We are, however, reproducing here a report prepared at the time by Spratt, who was himself present at the session, and sent to Robin Page Arnot (with a letter dated 26 March) and through him to the Workers' Welfare League of India (Document 17). This organisation, it will be remembered, was formed by communists and leftwing labour leaders of Great Britain in 1919 to help Indian labour to organise its trade unions. Shapurji Saklatvala was its member from the very beginning. The report was intercepted by the British-Indian police and produced in the Meerut conspiracy case. The text is from the documents of the case.

Concerning the basic facts of the session, Spratt's report tallies with the official printed report of the session published later from Bombay by N. M. Joshi. The text of the resolutions passed at the session and given here is also produced from the Meerut Record (P 8/4). They have been compared with the text given in the appendix A of the official report and found to tally exactly.

A brief report of the session and a summary of the main resolutions is also recorded in the *Indian Quarterly Register 1927* (Vol 1, pp 436-38). According to this report, prominent personalities present at the session were Srinivas Iyengar (president of the Indian National Congress for the year), Saklatvala, Lala Lajpat Rai, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, G. D. Birla, Dewan Chamanlal, Rangaswami Iyengar and B. F. Bharucha. This shows that the leaders of the national movement attached importance to this organisation and its session, though for their own purpose. It should also be noted that the session was to be held in Calcutta in the Easter holidays (April) but the time and venue were shifted to suit the convenience of Saklatvala, who wanted to attend the session while on a brief tour of India.

The executive council of the AITUC met before the delegates' session opened. Here D. R. Thengdi moved a resolution on the coordinated activities of the trade unions

of the British empire against the exploitation by British imperialism. Dewan Chamanlal supported the resolution with a vigorous speech and the resolution was carried. Later we find this resolution was adopted by the session (resolution 5). Saklatvala in his speech before the executive committee also stressed the solidarity of the workers in India and in Britain in their struggle against imperialism. He made some concrete organisational suggestions: (1) a standing committee for international negotiations, (2) a labour research bureau, (3) district organisers, (4) stricter rules for affiliation of trade unions to the AITUC, (5) a permanent office of the trade-union congress which could supply information to trade unions in the country and abroad, (6) a central fund to enable delegates to attend the trade-union congress.

On the first day the session heard the address of the president Rai Saheb Chandrika Prasad and the report for 1926 by general secretary N. M. Joshi.

The presidential address was that of a benevolent humanist and nationalist, to whom a trade union was not an organ of class struggle. He made the stupid remark that trade unions existed in India from ancient times and referred to *chaturvarnya* and *caste-guilds* of artisans as precursors of trade unions! Being connected with a railway union, he gave a detailed account of the exploitation of railway workers. He demanded a minimum living wage for them, an 8-hour day and recognition of their union and a stop to retrenchment. He pointed out that while chaprasis, chowkidars and unskilled labourers were paid Rs 9 to 14 per month, high officials were paid a thousand and more per month. He lashed out at the gross racial discrimination in jobs in railways where a majority of high-paid officials were Europeans and Anglo-Indians. In the beginning of his speech he paid tribute to Saklatvala as a champion of the downtrodden workers and referred to him as "our illustrious guest".

The general secretary in his report for 1926 stated that the number of unions affiliated to the AITUC in the beginning of 1927 was 57 and their total membership was 1,25,000. On the next day of the session, on 13 March, the

executive council met for about five hours and discussed drafts of resolutions to be put before the session. Later it converted itself into the open session and adopted further resolutions. Saklatvala addressed the open session on that day. He said:

"Freedom was a mockery unless workers could become masters. Trade-unionism was devised to secure that object. It was established with the set purpose of overthrowing capitalism and imperialism and its substitution by a workers' state and their control. It was no use saying that they should wait till everybody was educated. As a matter of fact, trade-unionism in Great Britain started in 1858 and compulsory education after it... In all western countries the trade-union movement had reached a higher importance than five or seven years ago... In India trade unions must strive to come into line with the advanced trade unions of the world. He suggested certain improvements in the existing management of the trade unions in India and advised them to call a meeting of every branch at least once a month, exchange literature and systematise their accounts. They should also maintain a research department to collect data regarding the ramification of companies and institute an inquiry into the conditions of the workers."<sup>54</sup>

Before Saklatvala's speech in the open session on 13 March, Spratt records that a resolution declaring the paramount need for the establishment of a workers' and peasants' party and the congress pledging to work for the creation of such a party on an all-India basis was unanimously accepted. Now this resolution does not appear in the official text of the resolutions adopted by the Delhi session. The full text of the resolution is given in Spratt's report. The article on the session appearing in the *Masses of India* (Vol 3, No 5, May 1927) also records the fact and quotes the identical text. The article further notes that the workers' and peasants' party envisaged by this resolution is not a labour party after the British model for parliamentary bargaining purposes, but a militant political party

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54. *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1927, Vol 1, pp 440-41.

capable of leading the workers and peasants in the fight against exploitation and "for the complete liberation of India from all alien domination". The fact that such a resolution about the workers' and peasants' party was adopted by the AITUC is mentioned by Spratt in another document prepared by him some time in October 1928. This document is "Labour and Swaraj" prepared by a sub-committee appointed by the 8th session of the AITUC with Spratt as convener, to draw up a labour constitution for the future government of India. It states: "The Workers' and Peasants' Party now developing in different parts of the country, fulfils the requirements of a genuine workingclass political party and must receive the support of the Trade Union Congress, as was decided at the 7th congress, Delhi, March 1927, and of the individual unions."<sup>55</sup>

Now, as stated earlier, this resolution on the workers', and peasants' party is not to be found in the text of the resolutions as reproduced in the official report of the 7th session of the AITUC published later by the general secretary N. M. Joshi in the form of a printed pamphlet. It is also not in the text of the resolutions reproduced here (Document 18).

The text, which is taken from Meerut Record has been compared with the official text and found to tally exactly. The text of this resolution is also quoted in the article in the *Masses of India* (Vol 3, No 5, May 1927) entitled "The All India Trade Union Congress" devoted to the seventh session. But the *Masses* article was based on the report of the session sent out from India, so it proves nothing. The fact that this resolution is not included in the text of the resolutions officially published is also noted by the session's judge in the Meerut case. After quoting the full text of the resolution, he comments: "But in the official report of this session of the AITUC, tendered by the defence as D 391, this resolution finds no place. There is only one other mention, that I am aware

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55. This document is also in the Meerut Record (P 78) and will be reproduced in the volume dealing with 1928.

of, of this resolution and that occurs in the draft of the proposed statement 'Labour and Swaraj' enclosed by Spratt accused in the circular letter (P 78) to the other members of the subcommittee appointed by the TUC at Kanpur in 1927 (November) to draw up a labour constitution for the future government of India. Oddly enough, I do not think Mr N.M. Joshi was examined in regard to this resolution when he appeared as a witness (DW 29)."<sup>56</sup>

The meaning of this discrepancy becomes somewhat clearer when we go into the history of the question of forming a political party of the working class as it was discussed in the AITUC. It will be remembered that the question of forming a labour party came up before the Madras session of the AITUC (sixth session). It was decided to get the opinion of the affiliated unions on this question. The general secretary in his report submitted to the 7th session reported as follows: "In accordance with the resolution of the Madras session, the general secretary asked the affiliated unions to express their views on the question of the formation of the labour party in India and he has circulated his own views on the subject. Unfortunately, very few unions sent replies to the circular. The executive council at its meeting held in Bombay in April has appointed a committee with D. R. Thengdi as convener to consider this question."<sup>57</sup>

On this question, the president of the 7th session said the following in his presidential address:

"Should the labour movement in India have a labour party independent of and separate from the Trade Union Congress? So long as the majority of the workers of India have no vote for sending members to its legislatures, it is needless to talk of having a labour party in India. So far this congress has refrained from identifying itself with any of the political parties in India, but it gratefully appreciates the services of those members in Indian legislatures who have taken interest on behalf of workers."

So Raisaheb Chandrika Prasad did not want even a re-

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56. Session Courts Judgement, Vol 1, pp 151-52.

57. Official Report of the 7th Session of the AITUC, p 44.

formist labour party because the workers have no vote. For him the only purpose of a political party of the working class was to get some bigwig elected to the imperialist legislature to plead for workers' grievances therein! It was in this background that D. R. Thengdi submitted his report and the recommendation of the abovementioned subcommittee. The proposal expressing the paramount need for a party which not only fights against the exploitation of the workers and peasants as well as for the "complete liberation of India from all alien domination" could not be easily rejected. It was a recommendation of the subcommittee appointed by the AITUC itself. Besides, it did not link the question of forming such a party with the question of the elections to the ineffective legislatures but with the question of the complete independence of the country.

When the resolution was adopted, there was already a workers' and peasants' party in Bengal and another such party was just formed in Bombay, of which D. R. Thengdi was himself president. At the time these parties were not headed by communists. Neither Nareshchandra Sengupta and Hemantakumar Sarkar of Bengal nor D. R. Thengdi of Bombay were communists. But later it became clear that these parties were sponsored by communists and N. M. Joshi, whose own view was that trade-union movement should not be mixed with politics, was not happy about the resolution. He probably took the view that it was not a resolution but the presentation of a report of the subcommittee on the question and its implementation is yet a matter for the further consideration. That is why he did not put that resolution in the official report. The communists and leftwingers on whose strength the resolution was adopted, did not question its noninclusion in the official resolutions published later. Their two main objectives were achieved, viz (1) the scotching of the formation of the reformist labour party, and (2) general recognition to the workers' and peasants' party by the AITUC.

But the fact remains that such a resolution was adopted at the seventh session of the AITUC. Spratt, as the convener of the subcommittee appointed at the Kanpur session

of the AITUC (November 1927), prepared some time in October 1928 a draft called "Labour and Swaraj" to be placed before the Jharia session of the AITUC (end of November 1928). The reference to this question in this draft is as follows:

"Workingclass Party...A definite political organ must be created with the policy and program here outlined. That workers' and peasants' party now developing in different parts of the country fulfils the requirements of a genuine workingclass political party and must receive support of the Trade Union Congress, as was decided at the VII Congress of Delhi, March 1927, and of the individual unions."<sup>58</sup>

To sum up, the seventh session of the AITUC, by electing S. V. Ghate as one of the assistant secretaries and by passing this resolution, registered the beginning of the entry of communists and militant leftists into the Indian trade-union movement. Contemporarily the *Masses* wrote: "It indicates that through the leftwing representatives the congress is at last being brought a little closer to the actual revolutionary struggle of the masses." It went further to say: "The influence of Comrade Saklatvala and other Indian comrades was visible in the election of some of the 'left' elements as officials of the TUC... The presence of the leftwing elements among the AITUC officials is a sign of advance and should make further progress possible."<sup>59</sup>

Balabushhevich, writing in the *Inprecor* summed up the results of the session thus:

"Under the pressure of the working masses and not without the influence of Comrade Saklatvala who was so enthusiastically welcomed by the workers throughout India, the Trades Union Congress and its reformist officials were forced to make a few changes in its policy and adopt a number of significant resolutions. We cannot, however, register any serious advance in the Indian trade-union movement, as the majority of the trade-union leaders in

58 Meerut Record, P 78.

59. *Masses of India*, Vol 3, No 5, May 1927, "The All-India Trade Union Congress", pp 6-11.

India do not support the class struggle but still believe in class collaboration.”<sup>60</sup>

The report in the *Labour Monthly* (July 1927, pp 443-44) was without comment.

A very big strike involving 40,000 workers of the Bengal Nagpur Railway, employing 60,000 workers had just concluded when the 7th session of the AITUC was meeting. It was the first massive and dogged resistance of the working class against the offensive of retrenchment and rationalisation which the British and Indian capitalists were now launching against the workers in the late twenties. Bengal Nagpur Railway was worked and managed by a British company headed by a retired president of the government of India railway board. Two accounts of the strike are available: (i) by the president of the 7th session of the AITUC in the course of his presidential address; and (ii) by K. N. Joglekar in his statement before the Meerut court. *The Masses of India* reported and commented upon the strike in three successive issues (Vol 3, Nos 3, 4 & 5, March, April and May 1927). We are not reproducing these articles here.

Both the TUC president and K. N. Joglekar have described how the strike began on 11 February, the main causes being low wages and retrenchment, the immediate cause being the transfer order being served on W. R. Naidu, the secretary of the union.

The incident of firing on workers, described in both the accounts, seems to have taken place in the middle of the first week of the strike. The adjournment motion on the issue of this firing was moved by V. V. Jogiah in the legislative assembly on 18 February. The motion demanded inquiry into the grievances of the workers and into the conduct of the government calling out the railway auxiliary force which resorted to indiscriminate shooting without giving warning. N. M. Joshi, speaking on the adjournment motion, took objection to the composition of the railway auxiliary force. He said, the very officers under

60. *Inprecor*, Vol 7, No 34, 9 June 1927 “Indian Trade Unions Hold Seventh Congress”, pp 713-14.

whom the men work turn out to be military when men strike work. He demanded inquiry into the shooting as well as into the grievances of the workers. Dewan Chamanlal said. 'We have yet to hear a word of regret from the government side", and asked, "Was not Col Henderson the head of the auxiliary force, a railway official?" He pointed out that the telegram sent by the labour union to 18 assembly members was censored by the government. This was greeted with cries of shame from opposition. The motion was, however, talked out.

On 25 February, a motion demanding an inquiry into the grievances of the railway workers of India generally was carried by a majority in the legislative assembly, but the government ignored the vote and reiterated the communique of the BN Railway agent, stating that the workers had no grievances and if they had, they were being looked into.

In three weeks the strike became general. Forty thousand were now on strike. The agent now received the deputation of the union but his attitude continued to be arrogant. He offered to cancel the fine imposed on Naidu and to make his transfer order temporary, but only on condition that the workers returned to work. The position of the strike was very strong at that time according to the TUC president, and yet he, V. V. Giri and the union counselled the workers to end the strike which concluded on 10 March 1927. The TU president congratulated the workers for withdrawing the strike, allegedly to test the bona fides of the BN Railway company's administration "who had been promising fair play and an inquiry".

K. N. Joglekar has rightly criticised this compromising stand of the TUC president and V. V. Giri and of the union leaders. He said, "They only succeeded in getting the strike ended without the workers getting anything, i.e. betraying the strike" He records, "No dismissed worker was reinstated, nor was any inquiry held into the several grievances of the workers..." The workers were duped and they had to face continued retrenchment in the

succeeding months, which led to another strike on that railway towards the end of the year.

The government version of the incident, which culminated in police firing on the workers was given in the legislative assembly in reply to the adjournment motion. The government in justifying the firing stated that the workers stopped the Puri Express and lay down in front of the same. The crowd was estimated to be between 500 and 1000. Actually the workers were picketing on the line and were trying to persuade the linesmen to join the strike.<sup>61</sup>

The first BN Railway strike, with the police firing became a focal issue for the Indian workingclass movement and for the national movement as well. It also attracted the attention of the international trade-union movement. The March 1927 issue of the *Masses of India* reported that the Bengal trade unions sent an appeal to the International Trade Union Federation, "which has issued an appeal to its constituent organisations and itself made a grant of financial help. Attempts are being made to organise assistance for the strikers by British Labour."

The April issue of the *Masses* reported: "The strike has become a popular theme in all circles of Indian society. There are long reports and articles in the press, there have been questions and motions of adjournment in the legislatures, meetings have been held to sympathise with the strikers and collect funds for them." Referring to the adjournment motion on firing on the strikers being "talked out", the *Bombay Chronicle* wrote on 21 February 1927: "It was unfortunate that the motion was talked out and the government was spared a crushing condemnation by the assembly of their partisan interference to break the strike through their officials on the spot."

The panicky withdrawal of the strike by the union leaders when "the position of the strike was the strongest" on the plea that it was "causing inconvenience to the public", resulted only in further retrenchment of workers by the vindictive management. The *Masses* of May 1927

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61. *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1927, Vol 1, pp 414-15.

quotes from the statement of the general secretary of the Kharagpur Labour Union:

"Shunting masters, guards, brakesmen, labour secretary, and others from Khurda Road have not been accepted for duty. The ex-strikers of Adra Bhaga and several other places report nonadmission to duty. The agent's terms regarding nonvictimisation have been broken by the departmental officers. Many Kharagpur ex-strikers, shops, stores and exchange operators, electrical engineers are being victimised, taunted and transferred to outstations, and pressed to sign apologies or threatened with dismissals on noncompliance."

The comment of the *Masses* (April 1927) on the first BN Railway strike after its conclusion in the article "The Workers' and Peasants' Party" was as follows:

"In the recent Bengal-Nagpur Railway strike the leaders did nothing to organise militant action. It was only when they could no longer hold back the workers, when the latter determined on revolt against and in defiance of the advice of the union officials that the union was reluctantly compelled to recognise the strike. And after the strike had broken out their whole efforts were spent in pleading for a settlement. Finally they ordered the strikers back to work without fraction of a concession because, as the president of the union explained, the strike was handicapping Indian traders."

## VI

### EXTENDED MEETING OF THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF CPI

It will be remembered that Saklatvala had agreed to meet the communists in Delhi on 14 March, the death anniversary of Marx. A circular was sent signed by Ghate and Bagerhatta to leading members of the party to attend an informal meeting in Delhi on 14 and 15 March 1927.<sup>62</sup>

Muzaffar Ahmad records that "... Comrades from different parts of India came to Delhi". He says that he presided over the meeting but does not say that a decision to hold a proper CEC meeting at the end of the month was taken there. But he says "there was a previous decision to hold a general body meeting of the Communist Party on 31 May 1927". Muzaffar says he asked Ghate to abandon the meeting, but the meeting, he says, was held. He did not attend it. A constitution of the Communist Party was adopted there and a number of resolutions passed.<sup>63</sup>

It appears that the exact venue and date of the CEC meeting were decided at the informal meeting in Delhi in March at which Saklatvala was present. It is on record that Ghate issued the circular convening this meeting.<sup>64</sup> Bagerhatta, the joint secretary till then, was also present. This is recorded by Muzaffar and also by K. N. Jogekar (*Reminiscences*). Both record that unreliability of Bagerhatta was discussed at the meeting. Muzaffar records that at the meeting Bagerhatta announced that he would not participate in the meetings of the CPI as he was not trusted. However the question was not decided at the meeting and he was retained in the presidium.

Minutes of the meeting have not been preserved. Most of those mentioned as office-bearers at the end of the document seem to have attended the meeting. Apart from Muzaffar Ahmad, S. A. Dange who was released from jail on 24 May 1927 did not attend the meeting as his health was in shattered state after a long and arduous jail term. This is mentioned in the annual report itself (Document 19).<sup>65</sup>

The May CEC meeting in Bombay was an important stage in the growth of the party. It was a determined effort of a handful of communists in different parts of the country to create an all-India team functioning coherently and in a

63. *Myself and the CPI*, p 441.

64. Meerut Record, P 2138: Ghate to Muzaffar dated 23 May 1927.

65. It was published by Vijay Singh Mohta for the CPI from 236 Kalbadevi Road, Bombay and printed by M. N. Kulkarni at Karnatak Printing Press, 318 A Thakurdwār, Bombay.

disciplined way—an all-India party centre—to guide through its open forum, the workers' and peasants' parties, the rising mass movement of workers and peasants. Saklatvala had corrected his earlier sceptical attitude. Through his observation and after discussion with comrades at the informal meeting of communists on 14 March in Delhi he came to understand the difficult situation in which the communists in India had to work. He had come to complete agreement with the Indian comrades before he left.

*The Masses of India*, conducted by M. N. Roy from abroad, was also putting forward the idea of building workers' and peasants' parties as an open forum for the Communist Party functioning in the face of repression, but he was stressing the building of a people's party as a broad anti-imperialist forum in place of the Indian National Congress which he maintained was ceasing to be a militant political force against imperialism. Comrades in India on the other hand, while seeking to make a breakthrough to building a mass movement of the workers and peasants through the workers' and peasants' parties, simultaneously concentrated on working inside the Indian National Congress and building a left wing there to counteract the compromising tendencies in the national-liberation struggle. Such is the main positive content of this document.

The document falls into three parts. The first part gives the "history of the birth of the party" and the work done by the central executive elected at the Kanpur conference. It records in unmistakable terms that the party was formally formed as an all-India organisation at Kanpur. It states at the end: "Though we succeeded in capturing this organisation, the party was kept in a provisional form and neither a definite constitution nor a program could be formulated. The executive appointed four provincial organisers to organise (?) with different people with an idea of enlisting their opinion on this subject...The above is a short history of the birth of the Communist Party of India." From "the report of the work done" between the Kannur session and May 1927, we can see that the central nucleus of the

party is now making a determined effort to function on an all-India plane. The idea of an all-India journal of the party is mooted but could not yet be realised. *Langal*, now *Ganavani* from Bengal; *Mehnatkash* from Lahore and *Kranti* from Bombay are mentioned as provincial organs. The coordination between them is by correspondence and travelling of leading comrades, both of which is hampered by police repression and the lack of funds. Some comrades are yet in jail (e.g. Shaukat Usmani), others though released (e.g. Gauhar Rahman and Shafiq) are under police surveillance.

The second part of the document is the constitution of CPI which was adopted at this meeting. This constitution was a distinct advance over the first constitution of the party adopted at the Kanpur conference,<sup>66</sup> which it will be remembered was criticised by M. N. Roy for not having adopted a clearcut and correct attitude towards the Communist International. This second constitution, on the other hand, in its second article defines the membership as: "Only those subscribing to the program laid down by the Communist International will be eligible for its membership."

It should be noted that this constitution nowhere states that the CPI was a section of the Communist International. On the eve of its fifth world congress, the Comintern had issued model statutes for the sections of the CI.<sup>67</sup> This model constitution covered all aspects such as name, membership, structure, nucleus (i.e. branch), local group, zonal district organisation, subdistrict organisation, party conference, party congress, central committee and audit commission (i.e. as it then meant, control commission). This model constitution was not known to the Indian comrades either at Kanpur (1925) or at Bombay (May 1927). But they knew one important aspect of the same, viz that a communist party is a section of the Communist International—the world communist party—and that each party is named: the "Communist Party of..." this or that country. They

66. Cf. *Documents*, Vol 2, pp 662-64.

67. *Inprecor*, Vol 5, No 11, 5 February 1924.

were aware of this at Kanpur itself. This constitution goes a step further. The program referred to in article 2 is the one for dependent colonial countries, the main points of which were outlined in the colonial theses of the fourth congress of the Comintern.

It is yet the constitution of a top cadre organisation which functions through general body meetings, committees at district and state level and through party groups working in the All-India Trade Union Congress and in the Indian National Congress. Three basic features of Marxist-Léninist workingclass party organisation are absent in this constitution: (1) that it is a *workingclass party*, (2) that every member pledges himself to work through a *collective* —a basic branch or a committee and under its discipline, and (3) that the guiding principle of a communist party organisation is *democratic centralism*.

Though the party was not affiliated to the Communist International, the constitution expressed the political link of the party with that fraternity of the world communist movement by article 2. The constitution also expressed its organisational link with that body, by the provision of article 14 in the constitution entitled *foreign bureau*. Here it is necessary to trace the genesis of this foreign bureau of the CPI. We find the first mention of it in the Amsterdam conference (11-12 July 1925) where communists from imperialist countries and those from colonies met to discuss organisational problems of the revolutionary movement in the colonies and the formation of communist parties there.<sup>68</sup> In this conference Roy stated: "They should not look upon him as an individual. In Europe a bureau of Indian communists had been entrusted with the supervision of the communist activity in India. Close cooperation between the British party and this bureau was essential. They published literature from time to time and he wished the colonial committee to take responsibility of circulating the literature first among all Indians in England and second,

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68. Cf *Documents*, Vol 2, pp 562-63 & 579-89.

find some method of sending supplies to India... With reference to our Indian contacts in universities, these would eventually come back to India and it was desirable that they should be put in contact with the European Indian bureau." Earlier in the same report, Roy said that "he was coming on behalf of the eastern department of which he had been asked to take charge". M. N. Roy was elected a member of the ECCI at the fifth congress of the Comintern (26 June to 5 July 1924) and was elected a candidate member of the presidium of the ECCI in its first meeting after the congress. Thus it is quite likely that Roy was on the eastern department of the CI and as such was "entrusted with the supervision of the communist activity in India". There are two letters signed by M. N. Roy which were produced in the Meerut case by Scotland Yard officials, who deposed that they were found with British communists when twelve of them were arrested on 21 October 1925. In one of them dated 15 September 1925 Roy is saying that the CPGB should keep in touch with the European bureau of Indian communists. In the second and earlier letter of 13 July Roy, acting on behalf of the eastern department of the ECCI, is arranging to meet Goswami and Dewan Chamanlal who were in London then and also wants Clemens Dutt to leave for India. Thus it appears that European Indian bureau consisting Indian communists abroad since the fifth congress of the CI was maintaining the link between the CI and the early communist movement in India. This bureau consisted of M. N. Roy, Muhammad Ali (Sepassi) and Clemens Dutt. We have seen that Muhammad Ali 'Sepassi' came to Pondicherry in 1924 to set up a communication link in which R. C. L. Sharma, a fugitive from the Kanpur conspiracy case and residing there, and Ajodhya Prasad of Jhansi who as a seaman acted as the messenger, played the main part. In 1925 an attempt was made to send Clemens Dutt to India for political work, but this did not succeed as the British government refused the passport to him. In the beginning of 1926, when M. N. Roy realised that the first communist conference in Kanpur in December 1925, despite its inadequacies, was a genuine effort of the exist-

ing communist groups in the various parts of the country to establish an all-India centre, he wrote a letter to Bagerhatta in which he made certain suggestions regarding the constitution of the Communist Party formed. This letter was sent through the Pondicherry 'link' and was re-posted from Madras to Muzaffar Ahmad. It was intercepted by the police i.e. photographed and forwarded. The photo-copy was produced later in the Meerut case.

In that letter M. N. Roy stated:

"As regards the constitution of the Communist Party my suggestions are: The Communist Party is the party of the proletariat; only those fully subscribing to the program of social revolution are eligible to the membership of the Communist Party; people belonging to the possessing classes will not be admitted to the Communist Party; each member of the party will devote part of his time every day for party work; the members of the party are obliged to acquire knowledge of the theories and principles of communism—they must study the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin; the qualification of nonproletarian elements to admission into the party will be their knowledge of Marxism, revolutionary character testified by practical work and complete repudiation (ideological and practical) of all connections with their class of origin; members will pay a monthly due of ...; three months' default will cause lapse of membership; the central committee will be elected on the principle of centralisation and not territoriality; it will be elected from the floor of the congress and will be the highest organ of the party until the next congress. *The party will maintain the foreign bureau as the ideological centre, composed of comrades who are not in a position to work inside the country; the foreign bureau will be representative of the central committee and will act as the organ through which the international relations of the party will be maintained; the Communist Party of India will be a section of the Communist International*" (emphasis added—GA).

In the next para, Roy emphasises the provisional character of these suggestions: "It is needless to say that these

suggestions as regards the program and constitution of the party are hastily made and are not to be taken literally. Besides, for the time being our program and constitution should be necessarily provisional. They will be crystallised as the party grows."

We see from the constitution adopted in 1927 in the meeting held in Bombay on 31 May the paragraph regarding foreign bureau suggested by Roy appears in an amended form.

The changes made are significant. Firstly, the foreign bureau is "maintained by the presidium with the sanction of the CE". This means the presidium keeps touch with it. Secondly, the foreign bureau is bound by the party program and the resolutions of the party here. Thirdly, the sentence suggesting that "CPI is a section of the Communist International" is not accepted and put in the constitution for obvious reasons. Instead "the foreign bureau is to keep constant touch with all CPs and the Comintern".

The authenticity of the letter is proved by the inclusion of the para on foreign bureau, though in an amended form, in the printed constitution. The covering letter dated Madras 31 May 1926 is by Krishnaswamy Iyengar, who was elected to the CE in Kanpur. It seems after the Kanpur conference, Krishnaswamy accompanied Muzaffar Ahmad to Calcutta and returned from there to Madras. In the covering letter he writes: "Since my return from you, I did not hear from you." The covering letter also refers to 'AP' (Ajodhya Prasad) who was then in Calcutta. It further says, "Herewith a copy of a letter from elder brother abroad to Bag(erhatta)." Actually, the photo or the copy produced in the case, was signed "R. C. L. Sharma, for his Elder".

The last three items of the constitution show that the party decided to formulate its own regular program as well as a minimum program for united front with other political parties; it decided to guide the work of communists in other organisations and set up a central office. Further by reorganising the central executive committee elected at the

Kanpur conference, with S. A. Dange and Muzaffar Ahmad in the presidium, S. V. Ghate as the general secretary, and K. N. Joglekar, M. A. Majid and A. Halim among members of the central executive, this enlarged meeting of the leading communists held in Bombay in May 1927, inaugurated the centralised functioning of the party on an all-India plane and created a guiding centre for the first upsurge of party's mass activity of 1927-29.

This is further confirmed by the resolutions adopted at the meeting which are given in the third part of the document. For instance, when the meeting adopted a minimum program of complete independence concretised in terms of antifeudal and democratic demands, which the party had been putting forward since 1921 and 1922 (Ahmedabad and Gaya congresses), it went a step forward. It chalked out a campaign to get the demand accepted by the Indian National Congress, which till then was wedded to dominion status.

The meeting formulated a charter of the basic demands of the working class, to form the basis of a militant trade-union movement which was already emerging as a red-flag movement. The meeting welcomed the formation of the workers' and peasants' parties in Bengal, Bombay and Rajasthan and called on its members "to form similar organisations where they do not exist".

The meeting condemned repression against communists like Gauhar Rahman, Shafiq, Usmani and Akbar Shah. It welcomed Dange from jail and wanted him to resume his activities immediately he recovers his health. Party's active support to the left wing in the Congress is reflected in the resolutions to support the arms satyagraha of Awari and to congratulate Subhaschandra Bose then under arrest under the Bengal ordinance but refused to accept conditional release at the hands of the imperialist government.

The meeting also passed resolutions which breathe the spirit of international solidarity, firstly with the first socialist country, the USSR, with the international working-class movement and with the national independence struggle in other countries. It denounced the Anglo Soviet rup-

ture by the tory government in England as a move to launch a war against the Soviet Union. It condemned the anti-strike trade-union bill of the tory government of Great Britain which it passed after the great miners' strike of 1926. It condemned the imperialist designs on China and sympathised with their struggle for securing economic salvation. It looked to the world communist movement and particularly the Comintern for inspiration and guidance. It decided to send a delegation to Europe to study labour conditions in Europe but it could not go as the imperialist government refused to issue passports.

This important meeting of the Communist Party took place openly in Bombay. It was reported in the nationalist daily press. That is why we find it recorded in the 'Chronicle of Events' in the *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1927. It was, of course, reported in the weekly journals of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, which had begun to appear in Bengal, Bombay and Punjab. The full report of this meeting appears in *Kranti* (Marathi weekly from Bombay) in two instalments on 4 and 11 June 1927.

Finally, a word about the persons included as office-bearers and members of the central executive of the CPI. The list is more or less the same as was elected at Kanpur. The changes are as follows:

(1) *J. P. Bagerhatta*, who was the general secretary together with *S. V. Ghate* as assistant secretary, is now made a member of the presidium. Muzaffar Ahmed in his account of this meeting records that "Janakiprasad announced at this meeting his decision not to participate in anything further because he realised that he had lost the trust of the comrades. After that he cut all contacts with the Communist Party."<sup>69</sup> However, at this meeting he was included in the CEC.

(2) *Gauhar Rahman Darveshi* was in the earlier list. He was a muhajir who became a communist in Tashkent and Moscow and was trained there. After his return, he was convicted in the Peshawar con-

69. *Myself and the CPI*, p 441.

spiracy case and joined Abdul Majid after his release and was working on *Mehnatkash* in Lahore (1927).

(3) *S. M. Mistry*... nothing is known about him.

(4) *Krishnaswamy Iyengar* was elected at Kanpur to the CEC. About him Muzaffar says: "Ajodha Prasad told him that he was the nephew of Rajagopalachari." In the CEC meeting at Kanpur he was appointed organiser for Madras. Up to 1927 and 1928 beginning he was functioning as the dak contact for Ghate and Muzaffar Ahmad. He was reposting letters and material received in Pondicherry from abroad to them. Muzaffar Ahmad records that in January 1927 in Bombay it was Krishnaswamy who took him to meet Philip Spratt for the first time. We will hear more about him at the Calcutta meeting of the CEC (December 1928) which expelled him from the party.

(5) *Soumyendranath Tagore* was elected secretary of the Peasants' and Workers' Party, Bengal, at its second conference held in Calcutta on 19-20 February 1927. He left for Europe in April 1927. Before he left, Muzaffar Ahmad records, he held no consultations with the committee of the WPP or with the CC of the CPI.<sup>70</sup> In the same place, Muzaffar Ahmad quotes a Meerut case exhibit which is a Bengali letter from Soumyendranath Tagore to him dated 14 June 1927: "In this letter Soumyendranath wrote that he had read in *Ganavani* (Bengali weekly) that the Workers' and Peasants' Party had also been organised in Bombay and it was necessary to have units in Madras and Punjab. He asked for a copy of the constitution of the party in Bombay and then referred to the main point, namely that he wanted a 'mandate' for himself. He wrote 'if you can secure a mandate for me from these two parties in the sense that Soumyendranath Tagore, general secretary, Peasants' and Workers' Party of Bengal, who is now in Europe, is authorised to establish relations between this party and labour organisations in England and Europe, if

70. *CPI and Its Formation Abroad*, pp 160, 162-63.

you can send mandates like this from Bombay and Madras, I can act on their behalf. With an all-India status one can work with the labour parties in Europe.''" This gives correctly the main content of the original Bengali letter in the Meerut case records.

In the same book published in 1961 Muzaffar Ahmad does not mention that S. N. Tagore was elected to the CEC of the CPI in the May 1927 meeting. Though Muzaffar himself was not present at that meeting he was consulted about the meeting before it took place and Tagore could not have been elected without the recommendation of Muzaffar Ahmad and Halim. Muzaffar does say that "his conduct vis-a-vis Soumyendranath Tagore had been faulty; it was the conduct of a goody-goody person, not of a revolutionary. From the manner he went abroad, it will be seen that there could be no question of his receiving the honour of a delegate."<sup>71</sup> How was he then elected to the CEC of the CPI here? The historical fact is that at that time Soumyendranath was considered by Muzaffar Ahmad as a trustworthy communist. In fact, in the same letter quoted above, Soumyendranath is writing that he is sending the remaining part of the Bengali translation of the *Communist Manifesto*, the earlier part of which had already appeared in *Ganavani* and he wants the whole to be brought out as a booklet. Whatever might have happened later, at that time Soumyendranath was considered a trustworthy communist by Muzaffar Ahmad who must have sent 'the mandate' Tagore had asked for and it must have been on that basis that later Soumyendranath appeared at the sixth congress of the Communist International as a delegate from India together with five others.

(6) *H. Abdul Halim*—was a colleague and a close coworker of Muzaffar Ahmad and was doing much of the editorial work for *Langal* and later for *Ganavani*.

(7) *S. D. Hassan* was associated with *Inqilab* issued

71. *Ibid*, p 163.

from Lahore in 1922. Later he was associated with Abdul Majid in Labour Publishing House, Lahore. But in 1928 he drifted away from the party.

## VII

### RELEASE OF S. A. DANGE: PUBLICATION OF "HELL FOUND" AND RELEASE OF SHAUKAT USMANI: "PESHAWAR TO MOSCOW" PUBLISHED

S. A. Dange was "released from jail on the completion of his sentence in the Kanpur conspiracy case of 1924 on 24 May 1927."<sup>72</sup> K. N. Joglekar records in his reminiscences that "Dange was brought down to Bombay to Arthur Road Jail from Sitapur Jail in UP and was released in the 2nd week (?) of May 1927. We gave him a public reception on behalf of the BPCC in the Congress House." Report of Dange's release appeared in *Kranti* of 28 May 1927 which also reported about the public reception. Joglekar and other comrades went to the jail gate from where he was taken to Joglekar's residence. In the evening a public meeting was held at Congress House at which B.F. Bharucha presided. Joglekar and Philip Spratt were present and spoke at the meeting. From the brief report of Dange's speech at the meeting, it appears he explained the difference between the words 'bolshevik' and "communist". He said: "Communists were called bolsheviks for historic reasons. I am an Indian communist." He said India was not against the British people but opposed British imperialism and capitalism. He declared his intention of working to destroy British imperialism and after that Indian capitalism. He assured the audience that he would continue his work as before.

The news of Dange's release and the report of the reception meeting was widely reported in the Indian daily press. When this reached abroad, the *Masses of India* in its July issue wrote an editorial (Document 20).

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72. Meerut Case Sessions Judgement, Vol 2, p 383.



Kranti, 28 May 1927, has a front-page article—"Dange's Release: Unprecedented Welcome in Bombay". It gives two pictures taken at the jail gate—(above) Dange with his wife Ushatai, and (below) Shaukat Ali, K. N. Joglekar and others.

The *Masses* also commented upon the inadequately reported remark of Dange that he was "not a bolshevik but an Indian communist"<sup>73</sup> and explained that both were different names of the same worldwide movement against imperialism and capitalism—a fact very well known to Dange and his comrades.

Dange had brought with him a manuscript written by him in jail about his experiences of the horrid life of a political prisoner in a British Indian jail in the twenties. This was later published from Calcutta in the beginning of 1928 under the title *Hell Found*. We are giving here a few extracts from the preface of the book by Dange and also an extract from the first chapter which are of historic importance (Document 21).

Shaukat Usmani's *Peshawar to Moscow (Leaves from an Indian Muhajir's Diary)* which was also published towards the end of 1927 played considerable role in attracting young revolutionaries to communism and to the achievements of the October socialist revolution. We are reproducing here the foreword which Philip Spratt wrote to the book. Usmani who was jailed with Dange and others in the Kanpur case was released from Jhansi jail on 26 August 1927. He was received at the jail-gate by Abdul Majid and Rafiq Ahmad of Bhopal. His reception at Kanpur was organised by Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, which Usmani records 'overwhelmed' him. From Kanpur he went to Lahore where he stayed with Gauhar Rahman and Abdul Majid, who were bringing out *Mehnatkash*. About *Peshawar to Moscow* Usmani says that he wrote it first in Urdu when he was arrested in 1923 and was in Peshawar jail. Later, in 1927, he wrote the whole thing in English and Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi got it published. From Lahore, Usmani came to Bombay and a reception was held for him over which Spratt presided. Dange, Nimbkar, Mirajkar as well as Spratt and Usmani himself spoke at this meeting. The meeting is mentioned in Meerut Record.

73. Cf also Muzaffar Ahmad's tendentious statement in *Myself and the CPI*, p 412.

Usmani met Spratt at this meeting for the first time, and again at Kanpur in November 1927 at the 8th session of the AITUC. Spratt's introduction was written thereafter as it bears the dateline Benares, 10 December 1927. Usmani records that the book was on sale at the time of the Madras session of the Indian National Congress in the fourth week of 1927 and says it attracted Jawaharlal Nehru's attention. The book later appeared in a Hindi version under the title *Meri Rus Yatra* (1928).<sup>74</sup>

A contemporary advertisement of this book was an exhibit in the Meerut case. It says: "The author, while a student, ran away from his home, joined the hijrat movement and left India. The book relates how he met the present amir, his imprisonment in Afghanistan along with his comrades, the death sentence passed on him in Bukhara and romantic escape. It shows you how an Indian can fight when the time comes. The author fought and saved a fort in Turkestan for the revolutionaries. You can see eye-witness account of the Bukharan revolution, of Tashkent, Moscow, of interviews with the greatest of bolshevik leaders like Zinoviev, Stalin, Rykov, Radek and others. On his return, the author was sentenced to four years RI in the Kanpur case in 1924."

## VIII

### "INDIA AND CHINA"—BY AN INTERNATIONALIST

We have seen in the section on the first congress of the League against Imperialism in February 1927 in Brussels how the spectacular advance of the anti-imperialist, antifeudal revolution in China was attracting the attention of the Indian public and inspiring the Indian national movement and its leaders. We saw how Jawaharlal Nehru was forging links of cooperation and mutual aid with the representatives of the Chinese national revolu-

74. It is now published as part of bigger book *Historic Trips of a Revolutionary*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1976.

tion in Brussels, how keen he was to ensure that authentic news about the Chinese developments should reach the Indian nationalist press, how the Indian National Congress passed a resolution expressing solidarity with the Chinese freedom struggle and made plans to send an ambulance brigade to China and how British imperialism prevented it.

It is against this background that the communists in Bombay issued a series of informative and inspiring articles about the Chinese developments and these were printed in the Bombay nationalist daily *Indian National Herald* in the months of January and February 1927. They were from the pen of Philip Spratt, who was at that time working with the Workers' and Peasants' Party of Bombay. These articles were collectively reprinted in booklet form under the abovenamed title and published by S. S. Mirajkar, secretary of the Bombay Workers' and Peasants' Party, in May 1927. Shapurji Saklatvala was asked to write a foreword to the booklet and he wrote just these memorable words: "All I have to say to the people of India on this subject is—go and do likewise." The author's preface is dated March 1927. This shows that Saklatvala wrote these words while he was still in India.

Apart from the foreword, the preface by the author, the book consists of five chapters: "Indian Nationalism and China"; "China and the Powers"; "The Development of the Revolt"; "China and India"; "Conclusions": "Appendix" (is a brief report of the world congress held at Brussels from 10 to 15 February 1927 at which the League against Imperialism and for National Independence was founded). Here we are reproducing the preface, and the first and fifth chapters (Document 23). The pamphlet as a whole was so effective in transmitting to Indian readers the rich and exhilarating experience and achievements of the contemporary Chinese revolution that the British imperialists immediately banned it.

S. S. Mirajkar gives the following facts about this in

# INDIA AND CHINA.

WITH A FOREWORD BY

SHAPURJI SAKLATVALA M.P.



By an Internationalist.

the course of his statement before the Meerut sessions court in October-November 1931:

"In May 1927 I published a pamphlet called *India and China*... The red cover of this booklet also was ridiculously made much of by the prosecution when our trial under section 124A began in Bombay. In the month of June the book was proscribed by the Bombay government. A hunt for the copies of this little booklet was conducted by the ever-ready CID police; several house-searches were made throughout India including my house and the Bombay Workers' and Peasants' Party's offices. In the month of August 1927(?) Spratt was arrested under section 124A as the author of the pamphlet and I was arrested on 20 September 1927 under the same section as publisher of the pamphlet. Spratt was not allowed freedom on bail even in that case, although every effort to obtain it was made. He had to remain in Arthur Road prison for more than two months. The high court sessions trial began in the month of November 1927, and the prosecution could not prevent Spratt from the privilege of getting a trial by jury, who brought a verdict of not guilty with only one amongst the nine jurors dissenting. The high court judge, Mr Justice Fawcett, who later became the chairman of the Fawcett inquiry committee<sup>75</sup>, had no other alternative but to acquit Comrade Spratt. The case against me was withdrawn by the prosecution."

Muzaffar Ahmad gives more details about the case. He says the "Bombay comrades, who addressed Mrs Sarojini Naidu as mother, all of them together, pressed her to persuade Mr M. A. Jinnah to look after the case, but he declined the brief. However, he gave a valuable piece of advice to Mrs Naidu. His advice was that we should make an application to get the case transferred to the high court sessions, where Philip should give up the demand for trial by a European jury; and then the case would be tried by

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75. This is the inquiry committee whose appointment by the government of Bombay brought the great six-month-long Bombay textile strike of 1928 to an end—Ed.



Kranti, 8 October 1927, in a banner headline says: "Spratt Refused Bail". Photo on the left is of Spratt and on the right Mirajkar.

a majority of Indian jurors, who would be naturally sympathetic to an Englishman being tried for treason in India. The Bombay comrades acted according to Mr Jinnah's advice. The case was committed to the high court sessions and a jury, consisting of one European and eight Indians was selected for the trial. At the end of the trial, the eight Indian jurors returned a verdict of 'not guilty'. Only the European juror adjudged the accused guilty. Agreeing with the majority verdict, the judge acquitted the accused. The 'India-China' case ended in this manner."<sup>76</sup>

After the booklet was declared forfeited in June, there were searches. For instance, Muzaffar Ahmad wrote from Calcutta to Spratt on 2 July 1927: "Our Office was searched for *India and China* pamphlet which has been forfeited to his majesty by the Bombay and Madras governments. The Bengal government has not issued such a notification."<sup>77</sup> Spratt wrote to some one in England about the same time, "You may noticed, if you see the Indian press, that a booklet called *India and China* was recently suppressed here. The authorities are obviously nervous about the subject."<sup>78</sup> The chronology of the *Indian Quarterly Register* (1927, Vol 2) records that on 28 July, "Newspaper offices in Calcutta and Bombay were raided for books on China and communism."

These details given by Mirajkar and Muzaffar Ahmad are confirmed by the official record now available<sup>79</sup> in the Maharashtra state archives. In this file we find under the head "India and China" the following details:

- (1) Bombay government notification dated 23 July 1927 proscribed the booklet *India and China*.
- (2) Government of Madras proscribed the same on 21 July 1927.

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76. *Myself and the CPI*, pp 465-66.

77. Meerut Record, P 1969.

78. *Ibid*, P 1975.

79. Bombay Government Home Department (Special Branch) File No 543 (13) CI of 1927.

(3) After Spratt's acquittal in November, the government of Bombay was not sure whether the proscription was good in law. In the file there is this confidential note by the home department: "In view of Spratt's acquittal in the proceedings instituted against him under section 124A IPC in respect of the pamphlet, it is not clear whether the proscription notifications are in any way affected." (dated 16 December 1927).

The file also contains the details of the searches after the proscription order was issued and also the proceedings of the high court trial of 21 November 1927. In the course of the search of Spratt's residence in the YMCA Hostel (Bombay) on 6 September 1927, the manuscript of the booklet was found, which was later admitted by Spratt as his. Before the high court Spratt made a legalist statement as advised by the defence lawyers, stating that he "did not intend to create feelings of disaffection towards the government, etc." All the same, he stated that "the intention was from the point of one who desires 'swaraj' for India, to discuss conditions prevailing in China and in India, to criticise the conduct of nationalist leaders, to analyse as far as possible the economic conditions and to point out the feasibility of organising the working classes and peasants. The criticism was against the policy of imperialism followed by the British government . . . I am innocent of the charge."

The file also has a copy of the judgement of 23 November 1927, which is 14 foolscap printed pages. After the jury had given its verdict as stated above (8 vs 1) the judge stated, "I accept the verdict, in view of the fact that the pamphlet is one upon which there is room for difference of opinion about its general effect and intention."

The judgement gives the following further details:

1. Spratt wrote these articles which appeared in the *Indian National Herald* (a Bombay daily: Editor B. G. Horniman). The first of these articles appeared on 24 January 1927 and the last is dated 9 February 1927. These

articles comprise the main part of the pamphlet i.e. about two-thirds of Chapter 4 ending at page 26 of the pamphlet.

2. The pamphlet was ready and printed (in pamphlet form) some time about the middle of June.

3. The advertisement of the same appeared in a paper called *Kranti* on 25 June 1927.

4. It was after the search of 6 September 1927 that Spratt and S. S. Mirajkar were arrested at the office of the paper *Kranti*.

5. In the course of his judgement, the judge refers to the argument of the advocate-general: "He (Spratt) says he came out to India to sell books—but 'the syllabus' found in his search goes to contradict it." Quoting this, the judgement comments: "It was, for instance, considered in the sedition trial of Mr Tilak where his position and the likelihood of his words carrying considerable weight with people, who might have heard them or read them, was mentioned; and the accused is certainly entitled to have his position considered."

6. The judgement goes on for pages and pages discussing the views of the advocate-general on the one hand and of Mr Talyarkhan, the defence counsel for Spratt, on the other. In conclusion he refers to the statement of Spratt in which he defines his intention which we have quoted above. In the end, addressing the jury, the judge states: "Well, there is at any rate this comment I think I should put before you. It is unfortunate from the point of view of the accused that if his object was merely this, we have not a single word in this pamphlet which talks of dominion self-government in regard to India and not even the use of the word 'swaraj' and that there are passages which seem to imply that he is in favour of a general eviction of the British from India and the complete independence of India." Here the judge appears to suggest to the jury that Spratt as the author and S. S. Mirajkar as the publisher of the pamphlet are both guilty

of sedition in as much both advocate "the complete independence of India". All the same the judge asks the jury to give "consideration to the pamphlet in a generous spirit—and not moral, in a niggardly spirit, whether that really was what the accused meant and intended."

In the early months of 1927, the *Masses of India* issued from abroad, wrote a number of comments on the Chinese events and their echo in India. Some of these comments sharply criticised the rightwing National Congress leadership for not sufficiently supporting the Chinese struggle, but did not emphasise the efforts in this direction made by Jawaharlal Nehru and the left wing in the national movement.

We are reproducing here an article from the *Inprecor*: "The Echo of Chinese Events in India" (Document 24). The quotes given in this from the contemporary Indian press are significant. One Langford James, quoted here as justifying the continuance of British rule in China, was the same who in 1929 appeared as the prosecution counsel in the Meerut conspiracy case and delivered that vicious tirade against Meerut prisoners and communism in general.

Another article reproduced here from the *Masses* is "Indian Aid for China" (Document 25). We also reproduce an article from the *Communist International* (Document 26), entitled "The Chinese Revolution and India" which gives a brief though good documentation of Indian nationalist reaction to the contemporary Chinese revolutionary events, both in the press and in public activities, as well as the sharp reaction to the dispatch of Indian troops to China by the British imperialists in pursuance of their aggressive designs.

In conclusion it is necessary to draw a pointed attention to two points made in the pamphlet itself. In Chapter 4: "China and India", which is not reproduced here, a sharp comparison is made between the external and internal situation in the last paragraph. After stating that both China and India are held down by imperialism, the

author goes on to focus attention on "a close analogy" in the internal situation of the two countries. In both the countries there is "a parallel growth of industrialism and the formation of the capitalist and working classes". Pin-pointing the role of the capitalist class vis-a-vis imperialism in both the cases, the author goes on to say:

"In each case also the imperialists won over politically a section of this capitalist class, in addition to the land-owning and the feudal remnants which form their traditional support within the country. The process has undoubtedly gone further, for obvious reasons, in India than in China. There a substantial part of the industrial capitalist class continues to support the national revolution. Here much of it, deceived in part also by the concession of what is now coming more and more to be recognised as the hollow pretence of selfgovernment, has ceased actively to support the national movement. But anyone who thinks on class lines must agree that this tendency is inevitable, and while its immediate reaction upon the national movement is a retarding one, it will in the end have the effect of clearing from its path difficulties which still face the Chinese government."

Here we find the same incorrect idea that "a substantial part" of the Indian bourgeoisie will inevitably go over to imperialism and leave the national movement, which we found in M. N. Roy's *Future of Indian Politics* and also in R. P. Dutt's *Modern India*. This is not surprising. A sectarian exaggeration of the compromising role of the bourgeoisie and the minimisation of its role in the national freedom movement was a tendency current in the international thinking in those days, though it had not reached the extreme form of the early thirties.

Thus we find in Chapter 5: 'Conclusions', the author is describing the correct policy of forming a left wing inside the National Congress, while building a militant trade-union movement and peasant unions. Answering the question, "What can we learn from the Chinese experience?" the author says here that the main thing we have to learn

from China is that we must "identify our movement with the masses".

In view of the broad national sympathy for the Chinese national upheaval, the "India-China" case attracted broad public support. A defence committee was formed to collect funds to fight the case. With the support of leftwing Congress and nationalist press, the case became a popular national cause, leading to the not-guilty verdict of the majority of the predominantly Indian jury.

## IX

### WORKINGCLASS STRUGGLES AND THE 8TH SESSION OF AITUC

1926 and 1927 were comparatively slack years, so to speak, as far as the strike activity was concerned. This is seen in the strike statistics of Bombay presidency, as well as that of India as a whole.

But when the workers' and peasants' parties are formed, a new element of consciousness entered the spontaneously-rising workingclass movement and a red-flag movement of militant trade-unionism was born. As it developed and grew it imbued the workers with the spirit of class-consciousness, class solidarity, militant unionism and it above all stressed the role of the workingclass movement in giving the broad national-liberation movement a revolutionary-democratic and socialist orientation.<sup>80</sup> We have already referred to the role played by the fraternal assistance given by British trade-unionists and communists like George Allison (alias Donald Campbell), Philip Spratt and Ben Bradley, in developing the movement in these early years. The British imperialists, with

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80. An entirely different development took place in Ahmedabad where Mahatma Gandhi founded the Majur Mahajan, a trade union based on class collaboration, which systematically kept away from the AITUC and the Indian trade-union movement. The question came up in the dialogue between Saklatvala and Mahatma Gandhi referred to in the earlier section.

their police vision attributed the emergence of this new movement entirely to the work of these British communists.

Thus the official government annual publication *India in 1927-28* wrote that George Allison, 'was mainly responsible for the organisation of these parties' (i.e. workers' and peasants' parties). It wrote further that Philip Spratt who came to India in December 1926 "was a powerful influence in strengthening the organisation of the workers' and peasants' parties... Both he and Allison were in a position to instruct the local labour agitators in the doctrines of Marx and Lenin." It said further that "the discontent among the cotton mill workers in Bombay and of the railway employees of Lilooah (railway workshop) furnished the workers' and peasants' parties with an opportunity of which they were quick to take advantage..."

But the movement arose out of historic reasons, from the conditions of colonial exploitation of India and its toiling masses by British imperialism. Hence it could not be stopped either by the public safety act (1928-29) directed against British communists or by the conspiracy cases like the Meerut case.

The documents in this section open with a review of the Indian trade-union movement prepared by Spratt some time towards the end of August or the beginning of September (Document 27). It was published in the *Labour Monthly* of October 1927.

The *Masses* of June and July 1927 give an account of the strike of the workers of Madras Oil Company, which shows how workers had begun fighting for their right to organise their union. The strike began when the foreign oil company dismissed 115 men without assigning any reasonable excuse. The union sent five representatives to put their grievances before the employers, who refused to recognise the union. The strikers then began to persuade the men working the company's transport to stop work and in the course of this it is alleged that stones were thrown on the lorries. The company bosses were so

infuriated that they themselves opened fire on the strikers wounding 17 men. The *Masses* of July 1927 has reported the succeeding events as follows:

"The cowardly shooting of unarmed workers was not even conducted by the police or military but by the officials and armed thugs of the company itself. The effect, however, was the reverse of that which the company anticipated. Instead of breaking the ranks, the workers stood firmer than ever. The very next day the strike extended to the other two oil companies. During the following week, scarcity of petrol caused a big rise in prices in Madras and the employers began to be alarmed. Negotiations now began actively and after the failure of the socalled labour commissioner, the police commissioner took a hand. Meanwhile the workers were thoroughly aroused. The determination of the workers to fight to the end had to be recognised by the leaders and at a meeting representing all labour organisations in Madras it was resolved to pursue the struggle with all possible vigour and it was even proposed to call a general strike of all workers in Madras. This was decisive. There were hasty negotiations and the company decided to climb down. The next day, 16 May, it was announced that the dismissed men would be restored and other grievances remedied. The workers won because of their solidarity and because of their resolute spirit of resistance."

The *Masses* records that the British Oil Company, which shot down Indian workers for daring to form their union, was making huge profits. The company's annual general meeting in June 1927 announced that "during the last year the profits had increased to the total of £ 2,478,000".

The most important strike of this period was the second BN Railway workers' strike. We are reproducing here K. N. Joglekar's account which he gave in the course of his defence statement before the Meerut sessions court (Document 28). Joglekar's account is critical of the BN Railway Workers' Union led by V. V. Giri for having accepted the retrenchment of 2000 men. At the moment of writing this, the autobiography of V. V. Giri published in

1976 has become available. This is how Giri comments on this settlement:

'The workers accepted the settlement and a committee of inquiry with Rogers, director-general of posts and telegraphs, as chairman was constituted to go into the question of retrenchment and the union also took part in the inquiry. The Rogers committee came to the conclusion that a certain number of workers had to be retrenched. The retrenched workers were given some special compensation with a promise that as and when vacancies arose, they would be absorbed. In fact, all of them were ultimately absorbed.'

'The strike was called off. It was the first time that full lockout wages were paid for a period of nearly three months. It was a great moral victory for workers in India. We had maintained all along that it was a lockout, while the administration maintained that it was a strike. However we won the final victory because it was held to be a lockout. The International Transport Workers' Federation said that the payment of three months' lockout wages to so many thousands of men was unknown in the world. It was truly a feather in the cap of BN Railway Union.'<sup>81</sup>

Both Rainy, the member in-charge of the railways, and Lord Irwin, the viceroy, appreciated the leadership of V. V. Giri of the BN Railway Workers' Union.<sup>82</sup> But the government did not keep its promise. Retrenchment and rationalisation were carried out on the railways and this led to the SI Railway workers' strike of 1928 and the GIP Railway workers' strike of 1930 as we shall see later.

The BN Railway workers' strike was reported in the *Labour Monthly* (December 1927). This mentions two additional facts: (1) When the secretary of the AIRF attempted to send telegrams to other railway centres asking the unions "to prepare for final action for general strike if necessary", the transmission of this was refused by the telegraph officials who stated that the contents of the telegram

81. *My Life and Times* by V. V. Giri, Vol 1, p 63.

82. *Ibid*, p 68.

were "considered objectionable". Nevertheless agitation for a general strike of railway workers continued to spread. (2) "Relief centres for striking workers have been opened as some remittances have been received from abroad."

The *Masses of India* issued from abroad wrote two comments on the withdrawal of the strike. Its comment in the *Masses*, January 1928, was entitled 'Kharagpur Betrayed'. It stressed the point that though the workers got the full lockout wages, the government did not budge on the main issue, viz that of retrenchment. The *Masses* quotes the final government communique to say that "the retrenched persons, including the 435 who have taken their settlement, would have the opportunity of being represented before the Rogers' inquiry committee".

The second comment was in the February 1928 issue of the journal. It was entitled "Lessons of Kharagpur". It pointed out that it was the prospect of a general strike on the railways that forced the railway management to concede the demand of the workers for full lockout wages. It stressed the lesson that it is only their unity, solidarity and the organised might of the union which is their most reliable weapon in their struggle against the capitalist system. It called upon the national movement to support the just struggle of the workers to defend their jobs and living conditions. It added: "The help of the Russian workers and a little from the British TUC enabled the Kharagpur workers to hold out for three and half months and reach close to the final victory. Financial and political support of the nationalist movement would have guaranteed the victory of the general strike."

Muzaffar Ahmad has recorded how the Workers' and Peasants' Party was also connected with the strike. He says he went to Kharagpur in November 1927 together with Abdul Halim and Dr Bhupendranath Dutta on the receipt of a telegram from Mukundlal Sarkar, who was there on behalf of the All India Railwaymen's Federation. Sarkar had also called M. Singaravelu to address the South-Indian workers who formed a considerable part of the Kharagpur workshop men. But they were mostly Telugu-speaking and Singaravelu's speeches had to be

translated by someone. Muzaffar Ahmad says further: 'Reaching there I found that S. A. Dange and Shantaram Mirajkar from Bombay were already there. None of us, i.e. Dange, Mirajkar, Halim and myself, were connected with any railway union. All the same V. V. Giri who was presiding over workers' meeting allowed Dange to address the workers. Halim and myself—we returned to Calcutta the next day; but Dange and Mirajkar remained there for a couple of days more.'

Muzaffar Ahmad also confirms the fact that "several thousand rupees were received from the workers of the Soviet Union" in support of the Kharagpur strikers and adds that this sum was received after the strike was withdrawn and Mukundlal Sarkar sent it back.<sup>83</sup>

Another important strike of this period was the strike of textile workers of Apollo and Manchester mills of Bombay. *Kranti* dated 20 August 1927 reported this strike on the front page with a streamer headline "Strikers' Big Procession". The report stated: "On 14 August a procession of striking workers of Apollo and Manchester mills with red flags started from Delisle Road. It marched via Parel, Lalbaug, Kalachowki, Queen's Gardens, Byculla and from there back to Delisle Road. Street-corner speeches were delivered on the way by Alwe, Mirajkar, Mayekar and Joglekar. The procession ended in a meeting at Delisle Road. Demands of the workers were: No three looms, no wage-cut, no retrenchment, adequate dearness allowance, right to strike." The article concluded with the remark: "Workers refuse to starve to fatten the rich"

S. S. Mirajkar wrote thus to Spratt who was in Lahore at that time:

"Joglekar and Mayekar are conducting a strike of Apollo and Manchester mills. I am not enthusiastically participating because the tactics adopted by these people are in our opinion wrong. This was the proper time to amalgamate the two unions, viz the Girni Kamgar Mahamandal and the Bombay Textile Labour Union Bakhale

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83. *My Life and the CPI*, Vol 2, Bengali edition, p 12.

ग्रन्थालय संग्रहीत संकाय

蒙古文書

Regd. No. B 2200.

卷之三

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Since you are permitted it becomes you to seize power.

卷之三

मुंबई, शनिवार तारीख १३ आगस्ट १९२७

[ अंक १५ ]

## शक्ति गिरणी कामकळ्यांची प्रचंड मिरवणूक शक्ति

## कामकल्पाला प्रगतिशील शास्त्र

卷之三

Chlorophytus spicatus.

ଏ କରିବାକୁ ଏ ଏ ଏ ଏ  
ପାଇଁ କି ଏ ଏ ଏ ଏ  
କିମ୍ବା, ଏ ଏ ଏ ଏ  
ଏ ଏ ଏ ଏ ଏ

१ यह एवं यह वाक्य शुद्धिः  
यह विवरण वाक्य एवं  
यह विवरण वाक्य एवं  
यह विवरण वाक्य एवं

देवी हातव देवी देवी  
देवी है देवी देवी है देवी  
देवी है देवी देवी है देवी  
देवी है देवी देवी है देवी

卷之三

सामाजिक दृष्टिकोण  
को लिए एक विश्वासी विद्या  
का उत्तम उद्देश्य

*Kranti, 13 August 1927, reports big movement among Bombay textile workers against rationalisation and wage-cut.*

was willing as well as Munawar and Jhabvala but Mayekar was obstinate and I think Joglekar is encouraging him indirectly. I wish you were here at this juncture. The strike might end in a day or two successfully or unsuccessfully."<sup>84</sup>

K. N. Joglekar in his unpublished autobiographical notes gives the following brief account of the strike:

Since the 1925 general strike, the Bombay textile millowners were planning to introduce rationalisation which meant increase of workload and retrenchment of workers.

In July-August 1927 the lead was taken by the Sassoon group of millowners by introducing increase of workload in the weaving and spinning sections of the Manchester and Apollo mills. There was a sharp reaction among the workers and they came out on strike against the attack.

"The Manchester Mill workers broke down after 3-4 days and went back to work. The Apollo Mill workers led by the Girni Kamgar Mahamandal continued the strike tenaciously for over a month and won a partial victory, the employers agreeing to hold in abeyance the scheme of rationalisation and increase of workload."

This was an important strike. The red flag which had appeared earlier in Bombay in the May-Day demonstration of the year was now appearing for the first time at the head of a striking workers' procession in Bombay. The strike was widely reported in the press in Bombay and elsewhere in India. That is why the *Masses* of September-October 1927 carried an editorial commentary called "The Bombay Strike". After referring to the last textile strike in Bombay, which took place in connection with the refusal of the government to abolish the excise duty on cotton which was part of the hartal organised by the national movement, the *Masses* reports as follows:

"An attack has been launched on the wages of the workers rather in a clever way. Means are being used to

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84. Meerut Record, P 1010: Letter dated 21 August 1927.



'rationalise' and standardise the production at the cost of the workers' wages. With the introduction of three-loom system instead of prevailing two looms, the workers will have to work much more and will apparently get more wages, but their actual rates would be considerably lowered. The workers were not slow in understanding the meaning of the new introduction. Four thousand workers of the Apollo and Manchester mills, the first mills selected by the employers for the new experiment, came out on strike in a body and this time their strike seems to have been on a better organised basis than ever before. In spite of unemployment in Bombay, the picketing and demonstrations of the strikers were so well organised that no blacklegs could be found to take their place. The Workers' and Peasants' Party of Bombay are to be congratulated on their vigorous work on behalf of the strikers. They did magnificent work in connection with the holding of demonstrations, in picketing and in general propaganda. It is due to the strikers' own solid resistance, backed up by the efforts of the Workers' and Peasants' Party and of the Girni Kamgar Mahamandal, a trade union run by the textile workers themselves, and not through any efforts made by the officially-run Textile Labour Union that already the workers in Apollo Mill have achieved a complete victory. As in the case of the recent Madras strikes, it was the threat of the strike spreading to other mills and becoming a general strike that compelled the employers to give way. This should give the workers in the other mills renewed courage to fight on to victory. Class solidarity and honest leadership are the best guarantee for the success of the workers."

This Bombay strike is also referred to in the *Eastern and Colonial Bulletin* of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) dated 15 January 1928. The article "The Workers' and Peasants' Parties in India" describes the beginning of the trade-union activity of the workers' and peasants' parties thus: "Many trade unions have been set up with the direct participation of the WPPs. A big textile strike was conducted by the Bombay Workers' and Peasants' Party in August 1927 ending in complete victory

for workers. In 1927 the party organised enormous demonstrations on May Day and on the 10th anniversary of the October revolution drawing in these large number of workers. In conclusion it is not too much to say that the young workers' and peasants' parties of India (especially in Bombay) have accomplished great work during the short period of their existence. A definite program of national revolution has been drawn up and extensive work developed among the toiling masses of India. With the cooperation of the Communist Party, left revolutionary groups have been formed in the All India National Congress and the Indian Congress of Trade Unions."<sup>8</sup>

The eighth session of the All India Trade Union Congress was held in Kanpur from 25 to 28 November. Three documents reproduced here are: (1) an overall brief report of the session as it appeared in the *Labour Monthly* in the section "The World of Labour, India" (Document 29), (2) the text of the message to the session sent by the RILU (Document 30), (3) a report of the functioning of the left-wing group in the session—prepared by S. A. Dange soon after the session (Document 31).

These contemporary documents give all the essential facts about this important session of the AITUC which was held against the background of the struggles of the workers just referred to. A full report of the session was published later by the general secretary N. M. Joshi as a printed booklet. It contained the full text of the address of the president of the session Dewan Chamanlal, one of the founders of the AITUC, a wellknown patriot, the text of the general secretaries' report and the text of the resolutions adopted at the session and the audited accounts of the organisation. A fairly detailed report including the text of important resolutions are recorded in the *Indian Quarterly Register* of 1927. This report gives the list of prominent personalities present at the session as follows: "Mardy Jones, MP, A. Purcell, MP, Hallsworth of the British Trade Union Congress, Philip Spratt, N. M. Joshi, V. V. Giri, Rai Saheb Chandrika Prasad, S H.

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85 Meerut Record, P 1201—found in the search of Kranti office.

Jhabvala, C. F. Andrews, Daud, Kedarnath Sehgal, S. A. Dange, Kishorilal Ghosh, Dr Bishwanath Mukherji, G. Sodhi."

Messages of fraternal greetings were received from the Communist Party of Great Britain, EC of IFTU (Amsterdam), political secretary of ILP (Britain), Annie Besant, H B Morena, Barrister Ginnwala, B. Shiva Rao, Kanji Dwarkadas, E L Aiyer and other labour leaders.

Message from the Irish Labour Party and the TUC said, "We look forward with hope both to the advancement of India towards political freedom and to the progress of Indian workers towards social and economic freedom."

The message of the CC of the CPGB, which is two and a half page typed document dated 16 November 1927, was intercepted in transit by the Indian CID and was produced in the Meerut conspiracy case.<sup>86</sup> The message made a pointed reference to "the brave fight of the workers of Bengal-Nagpur Railway" against the "deliberate attempt" of the government and the railway board to destroy their union and said "that for this reason calls for condemnation and resistance on the part of organised workers in all parts of the world". Referring to "the struggles conducted by the workers in Madras and Bombay this year" the message said that they have "demonstrated not only the growing strength of Indian labour but also the fine spirit of class solidarity that animates the Indian working class". These events, it said, demonstrate that Indian trade-unionism is no longer in its "infancy", but actually poised for "greater struggles that lie in front". In conclusion the message made a reference to the historic struggles of the workers and the toiling people of Russia and India which show "how it is possible, even in an industrially backward country, to overthrow the rule of imperialism and to build the firm foundation for socialism".

Before the session opened on 26 November, there was a meeting of the executive committee of the AITUC. At this meeting N. M. Joshi reported that Rs 13,605 were received from the USSR Council of Trade Unions, Mos-

cow, and added that there were no specific instructions from the donor as to what specific purpose it was earmarked. In the course of discussion V. V. Giri suggested that the money be allocated for the relief of the workers locked out by the BN Railway workshop, Kharagpur. It was also suggested that a part of the money be allocated to organisation and another part be spent for the defence of P. Spratt in the "India-China" case. After discussion, the executive committee decided to allot Rs 1000 for the defence of P. Spratt, Rs 3000 for TU organisation through the general secretary and the remaining amount was allotted to BN Railway Indian Labour Union.

Welcoming the delegates, the chairman of the reception committee made pointed reference to urgent issues affecting the workers of Kanpur and of the country as a whole.

Firstly, referring to the wretched housing conditions of the working classes he said, "I ask the distinguished visitors to this session to visit the houses of the labourers in this city, which in the language of Saklatvala, who visited them in the beginning of this year, would not in Europe be considered fit for animals."

Secondly, he referred to "the proposed military police" in the province and said this was mainly aimed at the workers' organisations.

The elected president of the session, Dewan Chamanlal, in his presidential address, among other things, referred to the statutory commission, which was announced at the beginning of the month by the British parliament to inquire and report on the reformed constitution for India. Questioning the authority of the British parliament, Dewan Chamanlal said, "We were not consulted—but if we were consulted—our answer is the same which India is giving with a unanimous vote—'We shall have nothing to do with it.'"

Further, referring to the two representatives of the British Labour Party on the commission, he said: 'From this platform I call upon the British Labour Party to withdraw the two labour members from the commission. As selfrespecting men they should tender their resigna-

tions voluntarily India does not want them and their own principles should prevent them from acting as the common hangmen of a nation in distress" Outlining the features of a constitution which Indians will themselves frame, he said it must be based on universal adult suffrage.

Referring to the struggles of the workers in progress during the year, he paid tribute to the fighting workers and to the labour leaders. He thanked the British and Russian workers' movements for the assistance they had given to Indian workers and asked the congress to send their greetings to the workers of China, Britain and Russia.

The report of the general secretary N. M. Joshi was presented immediately after the presidential address. In this he mentioned a bill introduced by himself in the legislative assembly, namely a bill "to free from criminal liability unregistered trade unions or any group of two or more persons acting in furtherance of a trade dispute". He also referred to May-Day celebrations organised in Bombay and other places. These two facts are in a way characteristic of the stage of the trade-union movement in 1927. While on the one hand, workers were already coming out on the streets demonstrating for the right to form a union, right to strike, it was possible for unregistered union or a group of workers to be prosecuted for a criminal breach of trust just for going on strike. This loophole still remained even after the trade union act of 1926 for the registration of trade unions. N. M. Joshi's bill sought protection for the unregistered unions. As is mentioned in the report in the *Labour Monthly*, even registered unions of workers in the post and telegraph department or those in the Government Cordite Factory were not allowed to join the Trade Union Congress session.

This was the first session of the AITUC in which a cohesive left wing appeared and functioned. This is clear from the document, "The TUC Left". This was drafted by S A Dange and circulated by him to the participants under his signature. It is a significant feature of the conditions in those days that the sessions judge devoted one and a half pages of his judgement to this document. The judge emphasises the fact that Dange in his defence state-

ment did not deny the document. The judge was interested in showing that the left wing in this session was stressing the solidarity of the TUC with anti-imperialist and militant organisations of international labour. The judgement thus underlines the fact mentioned in this document that a resolution expressing sympathy with the aims and objects of the League against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression was suggested by the left wing but 'was opposed by the official party supported by Purcell, a visitor from the British TUC, who condemned the 'League as an offshoot of the Third International'.'<sup>87</sup> The judgement further underlines "a number of resolutions evidently emanating from the party of the writer, that is from the communist wing. There were a resolution (adopted unanimously) congratulating the USSR on its 10th anniversary, a resolution (adopted) condemning the refusal of passport to Saklatvala, a resolution (rejected by the president) condemning the encirclement of the USSR by the imperialist states and provoking war, and a resolution (also rejected by the president) expressing sympathy for the work of the Pan-Pacific (Trade Union) conference at Canton."

The second day's proceedings opened with the speeches of A. Purcell, Hallsworth and Mardy Jones. Of these, the first two represented the British Trades Union Congress, while Mardy Jones represented the Independent Labour Party of Great Britain. The rest of the day was devoted to the resolutions. After adopting the resolution greeting the British fraternal delegates, the session took up the resolution on the boycott of the statutory commission which was moved by Kishorilal Ghosh. An amendment was moved to this resolution, calling upon "the parliamentary Labour Party to withdraw the two labour representatives". Dange opposed the same and stated that it "breathed mendicancy and was, therefore, humiliating".<sup>88</sup> The mover accepted the amendment and the resolution as amended was then put to vote and adopted by 50 votes against 30

87. Sessions Judgement Vol 1, pp 163-64.

88 *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1927, Vol 2, p 116

It is important to note that the session passed a resolution on the Kharagpur lockout (BN Railway workers' lockout): "This congress supports the central council of the BN Railway Indian Labour Union in the attitude they have taken up in their fight with the railway administration and offers its wholehearted cooperation in whatever action they may hereafter take; (b) this congress emphatically protests against the tone of the communique issued by the agent of the BN Railway on 23 November and considers it positively humiliating and calculated to hamper the progress of negotiations for an honourable settlement." The resolution was moved by Rai Sahib Chandrika Prasad, seconded by B. D. Mistri, supported by Daud and Dr Bishwanath Mukherji.

The resolution regarding the council of action mentioned in the "TU Left" report read as follows: "Appoints a council of action to organise a mass movement of workers and peasants to extricate them from their present condition of abject poverty. The council was to be subject to control of the EC of the TUC to whom it should present a report of its actions and submit its program of work."

The composition of the council of action was as follows: president—Dewan Chamanlal, secretary—S. H. Jhabvala, the other members were—P. Spratt, R. R. Bakhale, K. L. Ghosh, Daud, Kalidas Bhattacharya, Gauhar Rahman, Kamalnath, Abdul Majid, V. V. Giri, R. S. Ruikar and D. R. Thengdi.

As stated in the resolution on the statutory commission, P. Spratt, S. H. Jhabvala and S. A. Dange were appointed to draft "A labour Constitution for the Future Government of India".

The session adopted in all 32 resolutions, the text of which is given in the printed report by N. M. Joshi referred to earlier. Among these, 'resolutions initiated by the left wing and adopted by the session were: on political prisoners; denial of passport to Saklatvala, Thengdi and Ghate; protest against imperialism; greetings to the Soviet Union on its 10th anniversary; on China; Anglo-Russian unity; and on the prosecution of P. Spratt. The

rest of the resolutions were devoted to trade-union and organisational matters. The trade-union resolutions were about general labour demands and about specific demands of textile, railway, mine, press and munition workers, as well as about seamen and government employees. The organisational resolutions were amendments to the AITUC constitution, election of workers' delegates to international labour conference, adoption of report and accounts, election of office-bearers, and fixing the next session at Jharia in Bihar.

The leftwing trend of the session as a whole was reflected in the election of the office-bearers: *president*: C. F. Andrews, *vice-presidents*: D. R. Thengdi, Daud, Dr Bishwanath Mukherji, *general secretary*: N. M. Joshi, *treasurer*: Ginwala, *organising secretary*: S. H. Jhabvala, *assistant secretaries*: S. A. Dange and R. R. Bakhale.

An Indian workers' delegation to the international conference, with Dewan Chamanlal as the main delegate, D. R. Thengdi, Sethi and P. C. Bose as advisers was elected.

The trend was also reflected in the concluding speech of the president of the session Dewan Chamanlal, who ended his speech with the following words: "I call upon you, comrades, to raise the banner of your ideals demanding nationalisation of land and industry, a civilised existence, a government of the workers and economic system for benefit of humanity and peace. The road is long and your ideal is worth the travail. May you prosper on your arduous journey."<sup>89</sup>

Mardy Jones, the ILP delegate, at the end of his concluding speech raised the slogans "Down with capitalism and imperialism! Up with the international of the workers of the world!"<sup>90</sup>

Here it should be noted that the *Labour Monthly* report of the session mentions only Purcell and Hallsworth from among the British delegation as supporting the right wing.

The document "The TUC Left" records at the end that

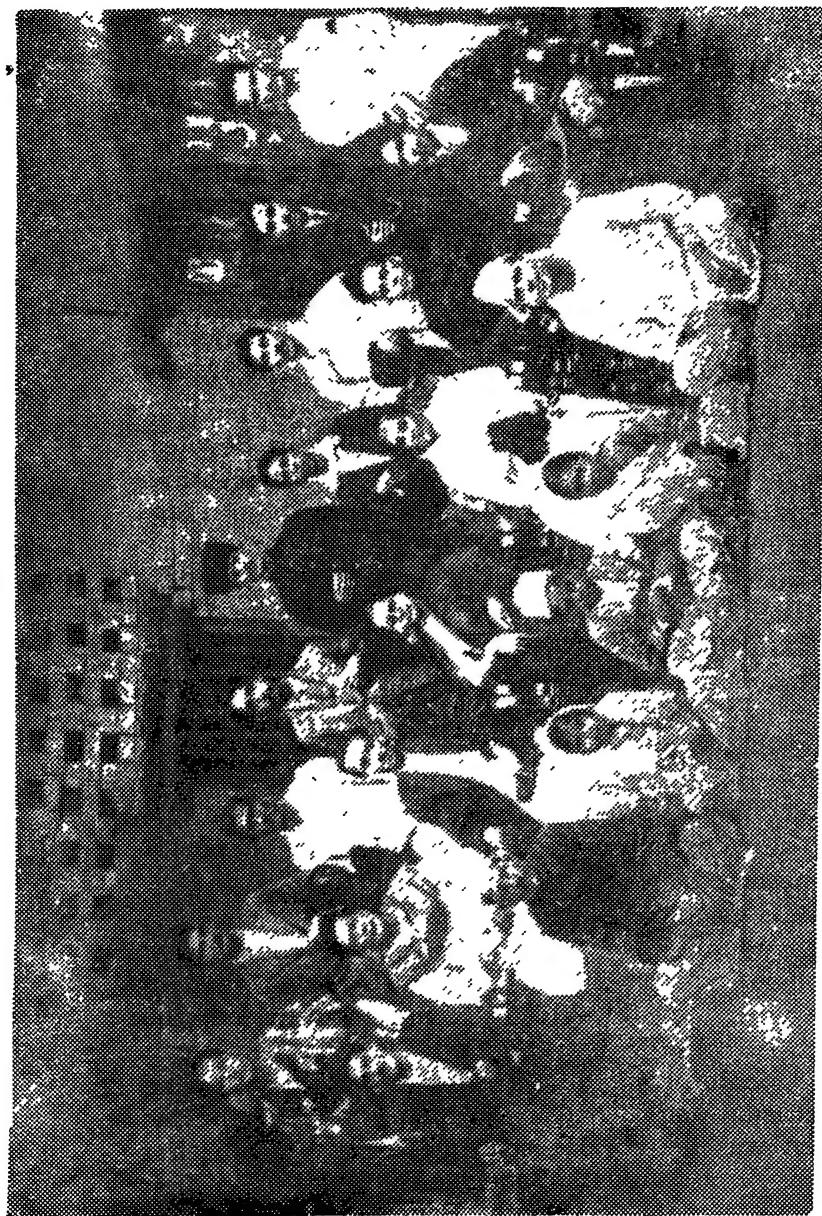
89. *Report of the 8th Session of the AITUC*, p 50.

90. *Ibid*, p 107.

an informal meeting was held at Gwaltoli, Kanpur, on 29 November, i.e. the day after the conclusion of the session, and gives the names of those who attended from different provinces. It also states that "the meeting decided to concentrate mainly on building new and penetrating the existing unions". This was the first time when the members of the Workers' and Peasants' Party working in trade unions were meeting on an all-India plane in order to coordinate and develop their work in the trade-union movement. The decision to build new trade unions and to extend work in the existing ones came in the context of some progress already achieved in this direction and was to lead to a countrywide upsurge of militant trade-union movement in 1928 and 1929.

The sessions court judgement on the Meerut case devotes a whole page to this document of the informal meeting of leftwing trade unionists on 27 November in the *Pratap* office. Quoting the abovementioned decision, the judge comments that it is "an exact description of the policy which is laid down for communist work in the trade unions" Naturally making the trade unions as organisations uniting all the workers in an industry, etc. for militant struggle for their just demands and democratic rights was not to the liking of the imperialist judge. He reproduces the list given in the document and presents it arranged provincewise. A photo was taken after this meeting on the same day at the *Pratap* office. Strangely enough the photo became a prosecution exhibit (P 1383) in the case (see next page).

Abdul Majid, in his statement before the court, later said this about the photo: "When I went to Kanpur in connection with the aforesaid TU congress, a friend, the late Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, invited certain gentlemen for tea, and photo of all these gentlemen who were invited on that occasion and also Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi and his children was taken. He sent me a copy." Muzaffar Ahmad as well as Shibnath Banerjee confirm this in their respective statements. Shibnath Banerjee adds that on the copy which was found with Dr Bishwanath Mukherji



Standing L to R 1<sup>3</sup> (Not Known), 4 Muzaffar Ahmad, 5 Shaukat Usman, 6 S. V. Ghate,  
7 Dharam Goswami, 8 Abdul Majid, 9 Shobnath Banerjee, Sitting on chair L to R. Philip Spratt,  
Kishorlal Ghosh, S A Dange, Ushatai Dange, (not known), S. S. Mitajkar, Gopal Basak,  
Sitting on ground: Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, his children and a relative.

(accused) was written "A group of trade-unionists attending the Kanpur TU congress." Kishorilal Ghosh in his statement confirms this and refers to Vidyarthi as editor of *Pratap*, "who is acclaimed as a martyr to the cause of hindu-muslim unity, who died boldly countering the murderous attacks by hindu fanatics in the recent disgraceful communal riots in Kanpur".<sup>91</sup>

## X

## SIMON COMMISSION BOYCOTT

When the Kanpur session of the AITUC adopted the resolution to boycott the statutory commission, it was acting in tune with the wave of national protest, which welled up against the announcement made by the British viceroy from Delhi on 8 November 1927. The immediate reaction of the upper-class Indian public opinion was a protest against the exclusion of Indians

On 16 November was published the all-India leaders' statement which announced boycott unless a commission on which British and Indian statesmen sit on equal terms is set up. On 18 November and on subsequent days, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta and other cities held monster meetings announcing complete boycott of the commission. On 20 November, Motilal Nehru, who was in London then, in a public statement called upon Lansbury to withdraw the labour members appointed on the commission. He added there will be no compromise. Nothing short of full responsible government will meet the situation in India. On 21 November an all-party meeting in Lucknow confirmed the 'boycott-commission' decision. On 22 November, when the statutory commission bill was in the committee stage in the British parliament, Saklatvala moved an amendment "No commission be appointed till approved of by the Indian legislative assembly" The amendment was, of course, negatived on 23 November. The British parliament passed the bill, which immediately received royal assent.

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91. Statement in Meerut Court, 6 August 1931

On 24 November, Motilal Nehru's letter addressed to all members of the Labour Party appeared in the London press stating that labour cooperation with the commission was an insult to India. On 25 November in the parliament Winterton placed the statement regarding the appointment of the commission on the table. Saklatvala promptly moved an amendment that Motilal Nehru be invited to the bar of the house to express the nationalist opinion on the question. The amendment was negative.<sup>92</sup>

The brief press statement issued by the Bombay Workers' and Peasants' Party immediately after the commission was announced appeared in the nationalist daily press (Document 32). The text produced here is from the papers seized by the police from the Workers' and Peasants' Party office and later produced in the Meerut case. At that time both *Kranti* (Marathi) and *Ganavani* (Bengali) had stopped. But the statement appeared in the November issue of the Punjabi monthly *Kirti*, at that time the organ of Naujavan Bharat Sabha. The statement criticised "the political groups who quibble over the personnel of the commission and thereby fundamentally forsake the principle of selfdetermination, the fundamental right of every nation". This quibbling over the personnel of the commission refers to the liberal reaction to the announcement of the commission which appeared in the Indian press at the time, criticising it as an "all-white commission". The statement of the Independent Labour Party, which appeared in the Indian press on 18 November 1927, i.e. three days after the second reading of the statutory commission bill in the British parliament, also criticised the commission because there were no Indians in it. The Workers and Peasants' Party stood for a total boycott of the commission and reiterated India's right to selfdetermination. In Great Britain the ranks of the Labour Party in the beginning raised the demand for the withdrawal of the two labour members on the commission but the reformist leadership soon quietened them.

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92. *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1927, Vol 2, "Chronology".

But the communist Saklatvala, speaking in the House of Commons on 25 November 1927 moved an amendment for a rejection of the bill. He declared that the government was insulting the people of India. That it was a joint conspiracy of labour and the government did not detract from the insult. He said the talk of protecting the minorities was bunkum. The whole commission was a farce. Alluding scornfully to Earl Winterton's observation regarding "our trusteeship for minorities", Saklatvala recalled that twenty-five years ago he was prevented from entering a white man's club in India. Was that not untouchability? Could the commission alter that? Every Indian politician felt that the commission was a means to deny India's right to selfrule. What right had Britain to send a commission to India to see whether Indians were fit to govern, any more than Britain had to send some one to France to inquire whether Frenchmen should rule themselves or whether the British should take care of the minorities in Alsace-Lorraine. Saklatvala's amendment read: "The house resolves to invite Pandit Motilal Nehru to the bar of the house to explain Indian sentiments and guide the house as provided in the preamble of the government of India act of 1919 before concurring in submission to his majesty of the names of persons, etc." The amendment was, of course, negatived without discussion.<sup>93</sup>

Motilal Nehru sent a telegram to Lansbury of the British Labour Party saying nothing short of responsible government would satisfy Indians. The official congress manifesto issued by Srinivas Iyengar, the then president came about the same time. "The Indian people", it said, "are entitled to determine their own constitution either by a round-table conference or by a convention parliament. That claim has been definitely negatived by the appointment of the commission." Calling for a boycott of the commission, the Congress president said, 'Concurrently with this boycott, we should proceed to frame our swaraj constitution in the Congress and if need be a con-

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93. *Ibid*, pp 91-92.

vention parliament or a constituent assembly composed of all elected members of all legislatures and the leaders and representatives of various political parties and communities."

Three articles on the subject appeared contemporarily written by Indian communists abroad. One was by M. N. Roy in the *Masses* of November 1927 (Document 33); then an article by Saklatvala (Document 34), written soon after the announcement of the commission; and the third by G. A. K. Luhani in the *Inprecor* dated 15 December 1927 (Document 35).

Roy's article in the *Masses* was written when the commission was not yet appointed but talk about it was in the air. It has a sectarian approach characteristic of Roy in those days. It is written under the expectation that the Indian bourgeoisie and the national leaders will turn to fullscale cooperation with imperialism on the appointment of the commission.

Roy's hasty assertions, which proved to be at variance with reality by the time the journal reached its readers in India, is all what the article says about the royal commission. The main content of the article, as stated in its title, is the role of the bourgeoisie in the national revolution. This is a continuation of his argument in *Future of Indian Politics* which we have dealt with. A fuller discussion of this will be taken up in connection with the documents of the sixth world congress of the Comintern held in the autumn of 1928 in Moscow.

↑ It is in this article that Roy first formulated the concept of 'decolonisation' (in quotation marks by Roy).

Saklatvala's article was written after the announcement of the commission. The viceroy had given out its personnel and stated that the central and provincial legislatures were to be consultative bodies. It was an all-white commission of inquiry which was to make a show of consulting "democratic" opinion in India before doling out another dose of

reforms. Saklatvala recalls how ten years before the Montford reforms came like the proverbial carrot accompanied by the big stick of Rowlatt act and the later Bengal ordinance. After referring to the "subsequent struggle", its withdrawal which led to rising dissatisfaction of the masses, he points out how Baldwin and company are coming forward with the idea of reforming the reforms in order to tighten the imperialist grip on India. He explains how the illusion of dominion status of the national leaders is ill-founded. This needed emphasis and Saklatvala's arguments strengthened what the communists, the Workers' and Peasants' Party and the left wing of the Congress were doing and saying.

Luhani's article, written in December, gives a realistic picture of the nationalist opposition to the appointment of the commission. One may add a few more facts which were not available to him abroad. M. N. Roy quotes Dr Ansari, the president-elect of the forthcoming National Congress session, as "desiring peace with British imperialism". Actually in a statement published in the *Times of India* on 10 November 1927, M. A. Ansari said: "The differences between the government of India and the British cabinet on the one hand and the people of India on the other are so fundamental, so great . . . that they would be considered selfsufficient for the people to stand aside and abstain from any participation in the work of the commission." On 15 November 1927 the conference of all parties called by Annie Besant decided to boycott the commission (*Times of India*). On the same date, Mahatma Gandhi said in a statement: "General, dignified and uncamouflaged boycott would be an effective answer." Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Bengal Muslim League as well as Punjab Khilafat Committee all stood for boycott. Jawaharlal Nehru on his arrival in Colombo from Europe on 22 November 1927 said in a statement that the British Labour Party's attitude was imperialist, a future labour government would be as objectionable as a conservative one. Motilal Nehru in a statement in London said: "If India agreed to such a pro-

posal, they would have to give away the principle of self-determination, which they had been claiming all along."<sup>94</sup>

Luhani's article rightly concludes with a call for a united anti-imperialist mass movement.

The nation's answer came, as we shall see, in the Madras session of the Indian National Congress (December last week, 1927) not only in the boycott resolution, but also, positively, in the adoption of "complete independence" as the goal of the Indian National Congress and in the organisation of a leftwing republican conference presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru to pursue the goal with the same resolution as displayed in national mass struggle.

## XI

### MADRAS SESSION OF THE CONGRESS: ROLE OF THE LEFT WING AND THE WPP

Two issues dominated the Madras session: (1) The attitude towards the statutory commission appointed by the British imperialist government in November. National protest against this was expressed in unmistakable terms as we have seen in the last section. (2) A clearcut definition of the goal of the national movement: was it to be dominion status or complete independence.

The August issue of the *Masses* noted: "Everywhere are there found signs of an incipient movement which is earnestly seeking for the right path forward in the struggle against imperialism." Writing this in a comment headed "Congress Radicals", the journal referred to "a sincere fighter as 'General' Awari trying to form a republic army all on his own". The same source refers to a group of "Congress radicals" who stand for "opposition to compromise and for labour organisation", to Sambamurti in Madras, who tried to get 'complete independence' accepted as the goal of the Congress, and to similar groups

94. Cf *Simon Commission and Indian Nationalism*, by S. R. Bakshi, Delhi, 1977.

in Kanpur and Rawalpindi. The paper sums up by saying that radical tendencies were emerging all over the country and that the Workers' and Peasants' Party which was working "on the right lines" should draw all these forces together.

This was written in August; but by November radical tendencies began to express themselves in the provincial conferences of the National Congress, held in preparation for the annual session in Madras and to elect the delegates. Thus the Andhra provincial conference meeting in Anantapur on 12 November 1927 passed a resolution demanding "complete independence" as the creed of the Indian National Congress; but by another resolution it suggested that in framing the constitution, the "commonwealth of India bill" of Annie Besant (which was for dominion status) should be considered. The other resolutions were: Boycott the Simon Commission; Congratulate Subhas Bose on his Release; Demand the Release of Cther Detenus; and Congratulate "General" Awari on his Sword Satyagraha.<sup>95</sup>

In UP, the political conference which met on 25 November at Aligarh, however, passed Sheo Prasad Gupta's resolution that swaraj be defined in consultation with representatives of all parties. Balkrishnan's amendment to define swaraj as "complete independence" was defeated. It passed a resolution expressing sympathy with China in its struggle for freedom and resentment against the action of the government sending troops to China.<sup>96</sup>

In the Bombay provincial conference held in November, K. N. Joglekar again put forward the same program which he had put before the May meeting of the AICC earlier. His resolution entitled the "Program of the Indian National Congress", which was practically identical with what we have printed in an earlier section, was printed in the agenda paper of the conference.<sup>97</sup> This document was in the form of a draft to be proposed by

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95 *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1927, Vol 2, p 345.

96 *Ibid*, p 340.

97 *Meerut Record*, P 1015.

the BPCC for adoption by the coming Madras session. But it was rejected by the conference.

The year 1927, it is true, was darkened in its early months by the recrudescence of communal tension, particularly in the north, by the agitation against the provocative pamphlet *Rangila Rasool*, by the assassination of Swami Shraddhanand, by the clash in Delhi over the body of the assassin after his execution. But as we have seen, the year as a whole was packed with events and developments of the leftwing and national-revolutionary movement.

Firstly, we have the rise and growth of the activities of workers' and peasants' parties led by the communists, the emergence of a left wing in the Kanpur session of the AITUC, the militant workers' strike on the BN Railway, in two textile mills in Bombay, and of the oil workers in Madras, publication of journals like *Kirti*, *Langa!*, *Ganavani* and *Kranti*, which were attempting to popularise the ideas of scientific socialism, of the achievements of the Russian revolution.

Secondly, there were the heavy sentences in the so-called Kakori conspiracy case, which the sessions judge described as "a widespread conspiracy in UP the object of which was to effect armed revolution for the overthrow of the present government". The judgement on 6 April 1927, protracted hungerstrike of the accused in jail in April and May, the execution of four of them and heavy sentences on the rest shook the nationalist public opinion in the country. It is necessary to record here the roll of honour:—Ram Prasad (Bismil), Rajen Lahiri, Roshan Singh and Ashfaqullah—who paid the supreme price with their lives; Sachindranath Sanyal and Manmathanath Gupta (14 years); G. C Kar and Rajkumar Sinha (10 years); Mukandilal and Ram Munshi (10 years); Vishnu Saran and Sureshchandra Bhattacharya (7 years); Bhupen Sanyal, Praveen Kumar Chatterjee, Ram Kishan Khanna, Ram Dularey, Ramnath Pandey, Banwarilal—all 5 years. Two approvers were released Horton, the police

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# সাক্কো অ্যান্ড বেন্জেত্টি

"Let the ruling classes tremble before a Communist revolution; the workers have nothing to lose by it but their chains. They have the world to win. Workers of every land, unite!"

(The Communist Manifesto)

বেন্জেত্টী কাস্তুরী  
অফিসিয়াল।

মুদ্রণ কৃত কান্তি।

chief, praised by the judge for investigation and preparing the case, was to figure later in the investigation and preparation of the famous Meerut conspiracy case (1929-33). The importance of the case and its participants is that some of the prominent leaders like the rest of national-revolutionaries turned to scientific socialism and workers' and peasants' organisations. The document "Revolutionary" (referred to in Volume 2) was probably drafted by Sachindranath Sanyal.

Thirdly, 1927 was the year when the leaders of the Indian national movement came into direct touch with the international workingclass movement, with the achievement of socialist revolution in Russia, then celebrating its 10th anniversary, and with the rising national freedom movement in Asian countries, particularly in China. Jawaharlal Nehru as well as Motilal Nehru participated in the meetings of the League against Imperialism in Europe. Later in November 1927, both of them visited the USSR. Attempts to forge direct links with the leaders of the Chinese revolution were significant. These are events, whose influence is seen in the proceedings and resolutions of the National Congress session at Madras. The Workers' and Peasants' Party did its best to popularise these developments through its publications and mass activities, to bring home to the masses the fact that our national-liberation and workingclass movement was a part of a worldwide anti-imperialist anticapitalist movement for freedom, peace, democracy and social progress at the head of which stood the socialist Soviet Union.

A campaign run by the workers' and peasants' parties in Bombay and Calcutta against the death sentence pronounced by a US court upon militant trade-unionists Sacco and Vanzetti deserves a mention here. These two, who organised protest demonstration in solidarity with workers fighting against retrenchment and wagecuts in the early twenties, were arrested and falsely implicated in a murder and decoity case with which they had no connection whatever. The witnesses in the case contradicted themselves, but the US court pronounced them guilty and sentenced them to death on 21 June 1921.

Then began a six-year-long mass protest campaign demanding the retrial of these innocent trade-unionists—first in the USA, which soon became an international campaign. As a result of this campaign, and especially after it came out that the particular murder and robbery was the work of some gangsters, the application for retrial was conceded. It came up for hearing in June 1926. The international campaign now rose to a great height. It received the support of such outstanding personalities as Henri Barbusse, Anatole France, Albert Einstein, Maxim Gorki, Bernard Shaw, Upton Sinclair, Heinrich Mann and others.

The Workers' and Peasants' Party took up the campaign and published two pamphlets, one in English by S. S. Mirajkar from bombay and the other in Bengali by Dharani Goswami from Calcutta. Both the pamphlets figured in the Meerut conspiracy case. The prosecution filed a police report of a public meeting organised by the Workers' and Peasants' Party in Bombay in Marwadi Vidyalaya Hall on the 28 August.<sup>98</sup> This meeting to protest against the electrocution of Sacco and Vanzetti was presided over by S. H. Jhabvala and addressed by S. A. Dange, R S Nimbkar and S. S. Mirajkar.

Both this pamphlet and the contemporary international campaign sharply highlighted the fact that Sacco and Vanzetti were victims of a frameup of a judicial nature perpetrated by the agents of American capitalism. This has since been proved, though after the lapse of half a century. Recently it was reported in the press that "the governor of the union-state Massachusetts (USA) had to admit officially, though in a confidential document, that the trade-union organisers, who were executed on the electrocution chair in 1927, were the victims of a judicial murder."<sup>99</sup> But the Sacco and Vanzetti campaign in India did not become a national one.

The reaction of the Indian national press when the conservative government of Britain broke off diplomatic rela-

98. Ibid, P 2311.

99. *Neues Deutschland*, 23-24 July 1977.



Kranti, 27 August 1927, gives the news of execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, with their photo, under the banner headline: "At last capitalism claims its victims".

tions with the socialist Soviet Union in the first quarter of 1927, again showed the same thing. It clearly showed how the national opinion in India appreciated the solidarity and help which this new socialist power rendered to the workingclass struggles in the capitalist countries and to the freedom struggles of the oppressed peoples. The Indian national press was quick to realise that Britain was not so much bothered about the loss of trade that this move involved, as it was angered by the solidarity and help which the Soviet Union rendered to the progressive and revolutionary movements in the British empire. G. A. K. Luhani, commenting on the event in an article in the *Inprecor*<sup>100</sup> gives extracts from the contemporary Indian press.

In this connection it is necessary to underline the significance of the visit of the Nehrus—Motilal and Jawaharlal—to the USSR in November. M. N. Roy who was in Moscow at the time gives the following account of this visit: "For the 10th anniversary of the October revolution, a number of organisations and leading individuals in India were invited... So even the belated arrival of the Nehrus—Motilal and Jawaharlal—was very much appreciated. They were welcomed as the leaders of a great people fighting for freedom. The Nehrus reached Moscow on 8 November. The anniversary was the occasion for a world congress of the friends of the USSR... On the eve of this congress there was a conference of eastern delegates under the chairmanship of Madame Sun Yat-sen. The Indian nationalist leaders were present at that conference. The conference adopted a declaration, which was moved by Madame Sun Yat-sen, which said that 'the delegates would participate in the World Congress of the friends of the USSR and pledge themselves to enforce its resolutions'."<sup>101</sup> The *Masses* recorded that the Indian nationalist leaders did not speak or vote for the declaration.

The same issue of the *Masses* records further: "Just

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100. Cf issue dated 21 July 1927, pp 833-34.

101. *The Masses of India*, January 1928.

a month later Motilal Nehru appeared before the general council of the League against Imperialism at Brussels. He came as a visitor only to speak about India in relation to the appointment of the royal commission on reforms and about the attitude of the British Labour Party in this respect... He began his speech by carefully dissociating himself and those he represented from the current in the Indian national movement heading towards separatism from the British empire." The comment of the *Masses* on this was: "After this (advocacy of dominion status—Ed) Motilal's bitter complaints against MacDonald & Co could hardly cut ice... His speech...after the bubble of constitutional advance had been so cruelly burst was inexplicable."

We have a different report of the same meeting in the *Inprecor*. This information journal of the world communist movement reported thus:

"Brussels, 10 December 1927: In this afternoon's session of the League against Imperialism, the leader of the Indian National Congress, Motilal Nehru, presented a report on the struggle of India for emancipation from British imperialism. The executive committee of the Indian National Congress welcomed the Brussels conference with joy. The congress of the INC which would take place in the next few weeks would undoubtedly decide to affiliate to the League against Imperialism. The speaker then described the great disappointment of the Indians at the attitude of the British Labour Party and of MacDonald. The appointment of the royal commission on India has caused great bitterness in India and this was especially true of the approval of this commission expressed by the British Labour Party. In India the forces making for complete national independence were growing ever stronger (stormy applause).<sup>102</sup>

Now it is well known that the goal of the Indian National Congress in those days was swaraj, a term which was never clearly defined. Was it dominion status of the type which Canada and Australia had in the British empire or

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102. *Inprecor*, 15 December 1927.

was it complete independence and separation from the British empire? The leaders of the Indian National Congress were putting forward the demand of dominion status which meant to them selfrule of the type of Canada and Australia. But on this point in 1927 things began to take a new turn under the impact of rising militant anti-imperialist movements in the enslaved countries of the east. Dr Horst Kruger, a GDR scholar, has put together interesting information on this point, based on the correspondence of the Nehrus:

"Gauhati session of the INC (December 1926) nominated Jawaharlal Nehru as the delegate of INC to participate in the conference of the League against Imperialism taking place in Brussels in February 1927. Jawaharlal who was abroad at that time wrote to Srinivas Iyengar, the congress president, to ask whether he might define the goal of the Congress as independence as the word 'swaraj' had been rather vaguely employed in the congress resolutions. On this Motilal wrote to Jawaharlal: 'I have seen your letter to Srinivas Iyengar. You are quite right in saying that you cannot put the case for India any lower than the people of other countries do. Saklatvala, (communist) MP, is here and is making great fun of the dominion status theory. We (the Congress) ask for swaraj and you can interpret it to mean independence, as indeed it is'."<sup>103</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi's views on this question at that time have been neatly summed up by B. R. Nanda: "The nearest Gandhi got to a political definition was when he explained 'swaraj' as a 'parliamentary government of India in the modern sense of the word'. In 1921 he frowned upon Hasrat Mohani's motion at the Ahmedabad congress in favour of 'complete independence'. Six years later he reacted equally sharply against a similar resolution which was passed by the Madras congress at Jawaharlal's instance. Gandhi's opposition stemmed partly from a feeling

103. H. Kruger, *Politics and Ideology in Modern India* (German), Akademie Verlag, Berlin 1976. See also B. R. Nanda, *The Nehrus—Motilal and Jawaharlal*, London, 1962, p 254.

that a weak and divided people to talk of 'complete independence' was an idle boast. A clean break with Britain also went against his ethical grain; it ran counter to the basic urge in satyagraha for the conversion of the foe of today into the friend of tomorrow. In Belgaum congress (1924) he said... 'I would, therefore, strive for swaraj within the empire but would not hesitate to sever all connections if severance became a necessity through Britain's own fault.'"<sup>104</sup>

It would be useful to highlight some of the features of the proceedings of the Madras session of the Indian National Congress which bring out the leftwing atmosphere as well as the role played by the Workers' and Peasants' Party members. The 42nd session opened in the Tilak mandap on 26 December. Foreign guests present at the session were: Dr Besant, Major Graham Pole, Purcell, Mardy Jones and P. Spratt. There on the dais together with the president-elect Dr Ansari, were Sarojini Naidu, Pandit Malaviya, Dr Besant, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Sen Gupta and the chairman of the reception committee Muthuranga Mudaliar. The session began with the songs of Bharati and Tagore.

In his address as the chairman of the reception committee, Muthuranga Mudaliar called for the boycott of the Simon commission and for the framing of the constitution by Indians themselves and for severance of India from the British empire. Calling for the declaration of rights in the constitution, he demanded "representation according to the needs of democracy" but did not mention adult suffrage. Defining the policy in the present situation he said: "The only policy which will meet the present delicate situation is one which permits us to enter the councils but forbids us to sit there."

Dr Ansari in his presidential address put forward a stand which can only be described as a compromising one. He said: "No sane or selfrespecting Indian can ever admit the claim of Great Britain to be the sole judge of the

104. Nanda, op cit, pp 295-96.

measure and time of India's political advance... Ours must be the decisive voice in the determination of our future. It is our inherent and inalienable right. Taking its stand on these principles, the Congress has all along advocated the convening of a round-table conference of the representatives of India and Great Britain with plenipotentiary powers to decide the basis of the future constitution of India, to be incorporated into an act of parliament... We can have no part or lot in a commission which has been appointed in direct defiance of the declared will of the people of India."

Dr Ansari demanded a constitution on federal lines, providing for a united states of India, with existing "states" (i.e. prince-ruled states) as autonomous units of the federation. He suggested a national convention to finalise the constitution.

The presidential address contained the following references to international solidarity with the peoples of other countries fighting against imperialism:

"A happy beginning was made in this direction by officially participating in the congress against imperialism held at Brussels and by becoming associated with the League against Imperialism.

"A more important and practical step taken by the Congress was the proposal of sending a mission to give medical relief and assistance to the people of China in the great struggle. The mission could not go as the government of India refused to grant passports."

Among the messages received and read at the session were from Motilal Nehru, Mohamed Ali Jinnah, Lala Lajpat Rai, Subhas Chandra Bose, Madame Sun Yat-sen and Dr Kitchlew. The message from Saklatvala was received on the 28th and read out on that day. In his message Saklatvala said: "Dear comrades: The might of tyrants hold me away from my countrymen. Many have tried this trick before, to save their ill-gotten empires, but not one has yet really succeeded. British rule in India means our people's perpetual starvation, ignorance, physical deterioration and social backwardness. British rule in India means a standing curb on Egypt, Iraq, Persia and Afghanistan."

Speaking of repression on the stalwarts of the national movement, Saklatvala said: "Thanks to the teaching of the communist movement, British boys like Allison or Spratt stand up for the rights of a people to be free; the imperialist ruler forgets the white man's prestige and is ready to wreak vengeance on his own jat-bhai."

"We who led the van with a purely political concentration have proved too feeble for the task. Awaken the working masses, organise the toiling peasants; take these myriads of India's toiling children right inside our national organisation by direct affiliation, discipline them within their trade unions, within an all-India workers' and peasants' party for direct economic passive resistance that can dry up the resources of imperial power and prosperity.

"Organise our youth of both sexes from the age of 10 into a large 'Young Comrades' League' and without scruple for their youthfulness, affiliate them also with the Congress."

Regarding the Simon commission he said: "If the British Labour Party has declined to respect the declared wishes of India's representatives and the Indian Trade Union Congress, and have become partners in the imperial game of the capitalist rulers of the British empire, the responsibility is theirs of making the workers of Britain share the penalties of a severe economic boycott.

"Do not minimise the difficulty of our task: The problem is not merely an Indian problem... It is a world problem, it is the problem of freeing all humanity from a militarist civilisation that it may build a new era of genuine equality, fraternity and liberty. Do not, therefore, conclude your sittings without adopting adequate measures and without creating necessary machinery for your cooperation with the workers of all nationalities who are struggling to attain the same end."

It will be remembered that after his effective propaganda campaign in India in the first quarter of the year, the British government cancelled his visa. He was thus prevented from going to the USA in the autumn of the year and from coming to India in December. This is what he has referred to in his message to the Madras session in

the opening sentences. One of the resolutions adopted at the session on the opening day itself was "on refusal of passport". The resolution demanded that "all unnecessary passport formalities be done away with" and the full freedom of movement to and fro "be guaranteed to citizens". The resolution further said: "The Congress condemns the action of the British government in cancelling the Indian visa of Mr Shapurji Saklatvala and thereby preventing him from visiting his native country and making him an exile. The Congress records its appreciation of the courage with which Mr Saklatvala has consistently stood for the freedom of India in spite of the opposition and difficulties he had to face in a hostile chamber where there was no second person to support him."

Actually the AICC meeting on 30 October 1927 at Calcutta had adopted R. S. Nimbkar's resolution against refusal of passport to Saklatvala to visit India to participate in this congress session. That resolution had also protested against the refusal of passport to many Indians invited by the Soviet Union Society for the Promotion of Cultural Understanding to attend the tenth anniversary of the Russian revolution. Viswanathan seconded the resolution and it was carried.

There were other significant resolutions which were passed by the session on the same day which reflected tendencies towards the left and towards solidarity with world revolutionary movements. Among the condolence resolutions there was one expressing sympathy with the victims of the Kakori conspiracy case in which four were executed on 19 December 1927. Among the accused in this case involving a daring raid on a running railway train to confiscate the government treasury for revolutionary purposes, were such wellknown revolutionaries as Sachindranath Sanyal, Manmathanath Gupta and others. Popular sentiment ran high as the case proceeded and when the brutal sentences were pronounced, there was a movement to get them commuted, particularly the death sentences on Ramprasad Bismil, Rajendranath Lahiri, Ashfaqullah and Roshan Singh. The resolution condemned the callous

attitude of the British government in refusing to commute these death sentences and paid homage to their martyrdom.

By another resolution the Congress welcomed the formation of the League against Imperialism and its conference held at Brussels in February 1927 and approved of the decision of the all-India congress committee to associate itself with this organisation in the struggle against imperialism.

The resolution sending "warmest greetings" to the people of China and expressing "full sympathy with them in their fight for emancipation", condemned the action of the Indian government in refusing passports to the medical mission which the all-India congress committee wanted to send to China. It expressed "deep resentment that Indian troops have again been sent by the British government to further their imperialist designs in China and to hinder and prevent the people of China from gaining their freedom". The resolution demanded "the withdrawal of Indian troops and police forces from China, Mesopotamia, Persia and from British colonies and foreign countries wherever they may be".

In the Madras session of the Indian National Congress, communists functioning through the Workers' and Peasants' Party played a significant role and in an organised manner. Muzaffar Ahmad in his report of the executive committee of the Workers' and Peasants' Party of Bengal, 1927-28, records: "Three of our members were elected in 1927 to the Bengal provincial congress committee and two to the all-India congress committee. At the Madras session of the Congress (December 1927) with comrades from Madras, Bombay, Ajmer-Merwara and Punjab, we formed a fraction which was able to give effective expression to our views in the subjects committee."<sup>105</sup>

K. N. Joglekar states in his reminiscences that he and R. S. Nimbkar were delegates and members of the AICC at this session. He further states: "We sent our resolution to this session, urging the declaration of complete independence as the accredited goal of the Indian National

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105. Meerut Records, P 139.

Congress. The resolution in the subjects' committee was moved by K. N. Joglekar and supported by Jawaharlal Nehru and was passed by overwhelming majority. It was passed in the open session unanimously, Jawaharlal Nehru moving it and K. N. Joglekar supporting it.<sup>106</sup>

In his statement before the Meerut sessions court K. N. Joglekar gave a detailed account of how he has been endeavouring to put the goal of complete independence before the successive sessions of the Indian National Congress since 1925. We have already produced the detailed program of the Indian National Congress which he put forward before the May 1927 session of the AICC. At the general meeting of the Bombay provincial committee on the eve of the Madras session, K. N. Joglekar again submitted the same program with an amended preamble as his "proposal to the BPCC to be adopted by the BPCC as its recommendation to the Madras session of the Indian national Congress. This program as well as the changes in the constitution of the Indian National Congress were printed on the agenda paper of the abovementioned general meeting of the BPCC. It is significant that the prosecution in the Meerut conspiracy case put this whole agenda paper as a prosecution exhibit against Joglekar!<sup>106</sup>

In this document K. N. Joglekar suggested the following new draft or article I of the constitution of the Indian National Congress: "The object of the Indian National Congress is the establishment by all possible means of the federal republic of India based on universal adult franchise."

The resolution actually put before the Madras session by Jawaharlal Nehru was: "This congress declares the goal of the Indian people to be complete national independence."<sup>107</sup>

The speech which Jawaharlal Nehru made in moving the same is significant. It left room for a slideback to dominion status which actually took place in the next

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106. Meerut Record, P 1015.

107. *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1927, Vol II, p 380

session of the Congress at Calcutta in December 1928, though it was for one year. Jawaharlal Nehru said:

"This resolution does not change the present creed of the Congress. It declares that the Congress today stands for complete independence. Nonetheless it leaves the doors of the Congress open to such persons as may perhaps be satisfied with a lesser goal. This resolution means what it says. It means the control of the defence forces of the country, it means the control over the financial and economic policy of the country, and the control of the relations with foreign countries, because nothing short of this can be called complete independence. The goal is for us an immediate goal and not a goal for distant future. Whether we achieve it today or tomorrow or ten years hence, I cannot say. It depends upon country's strength. We can achieve it. The goal is worthy of the high destiny of India and I hope that it will be realised in the near future."<sup>108</sup>

The resolution on boycotting the Simon commission was moved by Srinivas Iyengar and adopted unanimously. "The commission", said the resolution, 'was appointed in utter disregard of India's right of selfdetermination" and, therefore, it said "that the only selfrespecting course for India to adopt is to boycott the commission in every form". It called upon the "people and congress organisations . . . in the country (a) (1) to organise mass demonstrations on arrival and in the various cities which the commission may visit; (2) raise public opinion and propaganda to effectively boycott the same; (b) not to give evidence or participate in social functions in its honour; (c) not to sit or serve on select committees; (d) not to attend the legislatures except to keep their seats; (e) to secure cooperation with a view to make the boycott effective and complete."

K. N. Joglekar in his defence statement before the Meerut sessions court a year later gave details of the discussion in the subjects committee at Madras: "We (Nimbkar and myself) moved an amendment urging upon the

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108. Ibid, p 381.

Congress to call upon the country to observe 3 February 1928 as the day of national hartal accompanied by mass demonstrations and effective general strike throughout the country." This was not accepted, but Srinivas Iyengar said: "The term mass demonstration is wide enough to include even a general strike if anybody is serious about it; and we challenge the BPCC which is controlled by your comrades to take up the question and give a lead to the country for a general strike." Joglekar adds: "The main resolution of the Congress, therefore, called upon the people to observe hartal and hold mass demonstrations, but subsequently the working committee watered it down and only chalked out a program of hartal and protest meetings for the observance of the Simon-Go-Back-Day."

The Congress also adopted a resolution on "swaraj constitution" moved by Jamnadas Mehta. It authorised the working committee "to draft a swaraj constitution for India on the basis of a declaration of rights and place it before a special convention to be convened in Delhi". The composition of this convention was roughly described as follows: "The AICC and the leaders of other political, labour, commercial and communal organisations and the elected members of the central and provincial legislatures."

It is significant that in this session, when the resolutions on complete independence and on swaraj constitution were adopted, a resolution on hindu-muslim unity was adopted. The mover of the resolution, Sarojini Naidu, said:

"We have arrived at some sort of a settlement on the understanding and immediate daily matters." From the points of settlement adopted and enumerated in this resolution, it became clear that it was not so much a question of music before mosque or cow-slaughter as a question of nationalities and of sharing power at the centre and in the provinces. Thus, under political rights, the following agreed points emerged at least at that time:

Joint electorate with reservation of seats on the basis of population in every province and in the central legislature.

Reforms in the NWF Province (Pakhtunland) and British Baluchistan on the same footing.

"That with regard to the proposal that Sind should be constituted into a separate province, the Congress is of the opinion that the time has come for the readjustment of provinces to be immediately taken in hand and that any province which demands such reconstitution on linguistic basis be dealt with accordingly.

"The Congress is further of opinion that a beginning may be made by constituting Andhra, Utkal, Sind and Karnataka into separate provinces."

There was some opposition to this resolution.

In this connection, there was another resolution on 'reform in prince-ruled states' which was adopted by the Congress: "This congress is emphatically of opinion that in the interest of both the rulers and the people of 'Indian states', they should establish representative institutions and responsible government in their states at an early date." The resolution was moved by Manilal Kothari.

This was only the first step, which unleashed the struggle against feudal autocracy and for democracy in these regions. It took the democratic forces and even the Communist Party more than a decade to realise that a democratic set up in an independent India could only emerge after the liquidation of the princely order, which was an imperialist tool to divide and subjugate India, and the merger of their territories in the contiguous linguistic regions. As is well known, this was achieved through an antifeudal democratic struggle after the achievement of independence.

In 1927, nearly a decade after the end of the first world war, which was an imperialist war, the danger of another war began to loom large on the horizon of world politics. Struggle for redistribution of colonies was again intensifying among the imperialist powers. German imperialism was again raising its head helped by US imperialism. Old imperialist powers, particularly Britain and France, were carrying out military operations against countries fighting for their liberation. *Labour Monthly* in its issue of September 1927 published an article by A. N. Bhaduri,

a contact of M. N. Roy in Berlin in those days, on "British War Preparations in India".

The question came up before the Madras session in a resolution on "war danger" moved by Jawaharlal Nehru and seconded by R. S. Nimbkar. The second para of this resolution stated: "The Congress demands that these war preparations be put an end to, and further declares that in the event of the British government embarking on a war-like adventure and endeavouring to exploit India in it for furtherance of their imperialist aims, it will be the duty of the people of India to refuse to take any part in such a war or to cooperate with them in any way whatsoever."

R. S. Nimbkar, supporting the resolution, referred to rapid war preparations by British imperialists on all the frontiers of India and pinpointed the fact that the British government's war secretary was at the time in India. Britain wants to fight China, Afghanistan and Russia, he said, and as it cannot get help from its colonies like Canada, Australia etc. it wants to extort it from India and make it into its war base. "Question before us", said Nimbkar, "is are we to fight for own swaraj or are we going to be tools of the British imperialists in fighting independent nations, who wanted to be at peace with India?"

On the 28th after the Congress session was over a "republican congress" was held in the congress pandal itself. This was some sort of a conference of the leftist delegates in the congress session. This will be clear from the speeches at this congress and the resolutions adopted by it. This congress was opened by Bulusu Sambamurthy and was presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru.

E. Sambamurthy said in his opening speech that "at Gauhati republican movement gained considerable force, Awari took the lead. His idea was India should be a federation of the united states of India. Awari is in jail today. Today is the 81st day of his hungerstrike." Awari, a congressman of Nagpur, launched a one-man satyagraha for the right to carry arms (sword satyagraha). He was jailed by the British government. In jail he went on hunger-strike.

**Venkat Subramania Chetty**, chairman of the reception committee, said: "Russia has shown that even the most autocratic empire can be overthrown to the dust and a people's republic established. About the struggle of the suppressed nationalities of the world and about how Russia threw down the czarist imperialism, our president who rendered yeoman service to the cause of Indian independence at the Brussels congress (1927) would be able to tell you in greater detail." Other points he stressed were that the Simon commission must be boycotted, not dominion status but complete independence must be our goal and that we must establish the republic of India.

Jawaharlal Nehru in his address outlined how the Republican Congress could be a leftist consolidation working to move the Indian National Congress as a whole more leftwards. He said:

"It ought to be the duty of this organisation to lay stress on things which were to be done to give effect to the resolution of independence. In the first instance, the republican ideal should be promulgated. The main lesson of this congress was that it had been the most important session because it really changed the direction in which the Congress had been so far moving. In one or two matters it gave new angle of vision. Since the failure of the noncooperation movement, the Congress had been drifting to middleclass or to babu politics and was losing the support of the masses. Various forces are at work today which were important and which were likely to shape the future of the country. It was important for them to form some kind of an organisation which would keep the National Congress up to mark... Did India wish the government of the country to be based more or less on the exploitation of one by another or did she wish to remove the exploitation and the causes thereof so that there may be equality between the various members of the republic? That was the problem before us."<sup>109</sup>

Jawaharlal Nehru's speech, the tone of the resolution

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109. *Ibid*, p 348.

adopted and the composition of the executive elected at the republican conference confirm that it had the character of a leftist consolidation working inside the Indian National Congress.

The resolution on Simon commission boycott "called upon the people of India to observe hartals and organise mass demonstrations on the day of the landing of the commission in India".

The resolution on the martyrdom of Kakori prisoners "viewed with indignation the judicial murder of our young patriots of Kakori case, who have paid the extreme penalty of death for their burning love for their country and strongly condemns the brutal and vindictive sentences passed on them...". It "appreciated the patriotism and the selfsacrifice of the Kakori case and other political prisoners and conveys its sympathy to their families, friends and associates."

The executive committee elected had the following leading office-bearers: president—J. Nehru; secretaries—Swami Goverdhananand (Andhra); Parvati Devi; Muzaffar Ahmad (Bengal); treasurer—Rajanna (Lahore).

This brings us to the documents which we reproduce in this section. The first (Document 36) is the "Manifesto of the Workers' and Peasants' Party to the Indian National Congress, Madras, December 1927". It gave clearcut revolutionary answers to the urgent questions before the session. It gave a detailed program of abolition of landlordism, of the curbing usury, of ensuring living wage and democratic rights of combination and strike to the worker—a program which an independent and democratically elected government was to carry out.

It was not an accident that Muzaffar Ahmad's name was proposed and accepted as one of the secretaries of the Republican Congress. The manifesto of the Workers' and Peasants' Party which put forward a cogently worked-out program of an independent republican idea, which was being vaguely put forward at the republican conference, stood in the name of Muzaffar Ahmad, on behalf of the Workers' and Peasants' Party.

In his defence statement at Meerut, Muzaffar Ahmad

MANIFESTO OF THE  
**WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' PARTY**  
TO THE  
**INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS**

*Madras, December, 1927*

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BOYCOTT THE COMMISSION  
NO ROUND TABLE CONFERENCES

A NATIONAL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY  
UNIVERSAL ADULT SUFFRAGE  
COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE

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RALLY THE PEOPLE TO MASS ACTION  
GENERAL STRIKE AND NON-PAYMENT OF TAXES  
LAND TO THE PEASANT  
BREAD FOR THE TOILER  
EDUCATION FOR ALL

stated that he was responsible for getting this manifesto published in Calcutta.<sup>110</sup> The manifesto was drafted by Muzaffar Ahmad in consultation with P. Spratt, who was in Calcutta in December, and with other leading members of the WPP of Bengal. Printed copies of this were produced as prosecution exhibits in the Meerut case. One copy—a typed one, was found with Abdul Majid in the search on 20 March 1929, which bore a postscript in Muzaffar Ahmad's handwriting asking whether it could be published in the name of Workers' and Peasants' Party of India.<sup>111</sup> At that time these parties existed only in Bengal and Bombay and as we see from the print line, the manifesto was published in the name of the party in Bengal. Later a meeting of WPP members attending the Madras session held on 28 December "decided that a congress should be held for the purpose of formation of the AIWPP at Calcutta within the period 10 February-10 March 1928, arrangements being left to Muzaffar Ahmad."<sup>112</sup> Actually this took place only at the end of December 1928 at the time of the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress when the first all-India workers' and peasants' conference was held.

Muzaffar Ahmad also explained in his defence statement the significance of the slogan of national constituent assembly in the manifesto. He said:

"For the first time in India this slogan was given by the Workers' and Peasants' Party in its manifesto to the Indian National Congress, Madras, in December 1927. This session of the Congress was held at a time when a stir was created all over India by the appointment by the British government of Simon commission... At a time when the national bourgeoisie was going to pass the resolution of complete independence of India, the Workers' and Peasants' Party thought it best to raise before it the highest democratic slogan of bourgeois revolutionaries... The slogan of boycott of the Simon commission was a negative one. Mere passing of the resolution of independence was not a

110. Meerut Record, P 480.

111. Ibid, P 704.

112. Ibid, P 1373 (2) : Note by P. Spratt.

positive action. A real positive action—summoning of constituent assembly—to assert the right of selfdetermination was suggested.”<sup>113</sup>

It should be noted here that on the eve of the Madras session, soon after the Simon commission was announced and the congress president S. Srinivas Iyengar had suggested its boycott, he had also put forward the slogan of a constituent assembly but one based on a restricted franchise. In the statement issued on 15 November 1927 Srinivas Iyengar said, “Concurrently with this boycott we should proceed to frame our swaraj constitution in the Congress and if need be, by a convention parliament or a constituent assembly composed of all elected members of all the legislatures and the leaders and the representatives of various political parties and communities.”

Thus the constituent assembly which the Congress was demanding at that time was a conference of the leaders of all political parties, which was to prepare a draft constitution, which was to be the basis of negotiations with the British government in a round-table conference. But even this demand was not being accepted at that time by the British government. What the Workers’ and Peasants’ Party demanded was no round-table conference but a constituent assembly as a slogan of revolutionary action by the common people and the toiling masses, and it was coupled with a program of socioeconomic demands of the masses.

The December issue of the *Masses* which was probably available in India when the manifesto was being prepared, had given the same slogan. The comment entitled “The National Congress” in this issue, reproduced here as the second document (Document 37), put forward the idea that the campaign for boycotting the Simon commission should take the form of election of the constituent assembly. This shows that M. N. Roy’s paper was out of touch with the actual situation in India and visualising the developing of the boycott movement in a mechanical

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113. Muzaffar Ahmad’s Defence Statement before the Sessions Court, Meerut, on 2 June 1931.

way through the campaign for the election of the constituent assembly.

In his article in the *Inprecor*: "Imperialism and Indian Nationalism" (Document 38), written after he had received telegraphic reports of the Madras session, he repeated the same idea.

The fourth document (Document 39) in this section is the comment in the *Masses* of January 1928 entitled "The Madras Congress" which briefly reviews the session as a whole.

The *Masses* carried forward the review of the Madras session of the National Congress in the next—February 1928—issue in the comment entitled "Constituent Assembly". The article called upon the revolutionary-nationalists not to be "deluded by the apparent victory at Madras". The passing of the complete independence resolution does not rule out the danger of a compromise on the basis of "dominion status". The leadership of the Congress does not want to go in for a militant struggle on the issue of boycotting the Simon commission. They had emphasised that the passing of the independence resolution did not mean a change in the creed of the Congress which laid stress on "peaceful and legitimate means". The article stated that "a struggle against a powerful imperialist state can be successful only as a revolutionary mass struggle". It called upon revolutionary-nationalists to give the boycott campaign a militant turn by making it "a campaign with the demand for the election of a constituent assembly". Further it put forward a program of national revolution which covered the same ground as the program put forward in the manifesto of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, but was more advanced and detailed.

This comment of the *Masses* probably reached India in February. There is a "Manifesto of the Workers' and Peasants' Party in India on the Boycott of the Simon Commission", in the records of the Meerut conspiracy case<sup>114</sup> which follows the same operative line and reproduces the same program of national revolution as the

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114. Meerut Record, P 441.

comment of the *Masses*. Muzaffar Ahmad in his defence statement in the Meerut case says about this manifesto that it was 'merely drafted but never adopted or published. From its content it is clear that it was drafted just after the Madras session of the Indian National Congress when the Workers' and Peasants' Party of India was not constituted. It was our intention to consolidate the WPPs of Bengal and Bombay (at that time, there existed only these two parties) into one single unit as the WPP of India in February or March 1928 and the manifesto was, therefore, abandoned."<sup>115</sup>

We are here concerned with the content of this document, after its authenticity has been confirmed by Muzaffar Ahmad's statement. Firstly, the advanced version of the program of national revolution it puts forward needs to be taken note of for record:

"The Workers' and Peasants' Party will mobilise the toiling masses in the campaign for the boycott of the present commission or any other commission, irrespective of its composition, and for the election of a constituent assembly as the only organ competent to determine the political future of the Indian people.

"The program for the realisation of which the Workers' and Peasants' Party will organise this campaign is: (1) establishment of free national-democratic state; (2) nationalisation of land (abolition of the native states and landlordism); (3) abolition of all levies on the agricultural population except land tax not exceeding 15 per cent of the net income; (4) exemption from taxation of peasants cultivating 'uneconomic holdings'; (5) annulment of peasants' indebtedness; (6) control over usury (interest not to exceed 6 per cent per annum); (7) nationalisation of public utilities (railways, telegraph, waterways, etc.) and mines; (8) minimum wages guaranteed and irreducible standard of living for the industrial workers; (9) improvement of labour and housing conditions; (10) eight-hour day and 44-hour week; (11) free primary education;

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115. Muzaffar Ahmad's defence statement—court proceedings, p 480.

(12) insurance against unemployment, sickness, old age, etc and maternity benefit (employers and state to contribute 75 per cent to the fund); (13) freedom of press, speech and assembly; (14) right to strike and carry arms; (15) freedom of religion and worship; (16) abolition of caste privileges; (17) equal political and economic rights for women.

"This program corresponds to the interests of the overwhelming majority of the Indian people. The proletariat, peasantry and the oppressed middle class must unite in a struggle for the realisation of this program."

As for the operative line of action which the manifesto suggests, it is as follows:

"The negative slogan of boycott should be supplemented by positive actions to assert the right of selfdetermination. This action should be the *election of a constituent assembly* which will decide all the outstanding political questions.

"None of the existing political organisations has the right to speak on behalf of the entire people. A constituent assembly elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage will be the incontestable custodian of the sovereign right of the people. The Indian people do not need the sanction of a foreign parliament to create such an organ of theirs. The campaign for the election of the constituent assembly should begin immediately. Committees for the election of the constituent assembly should be created throughout the country. There should be a committee in each village as well as in each town. The masses should be involved in this campaign. Workers' and peasants' representatives should sit on the committees. The participation of the greatest possible majority of adult men and women should be secured in the election.

"Thus the attention of the country will be focused upon the constructive work."

As far as the program is concerned, it is along these lines that the WPP developed it and adopted it later at the end of 1928 in its all-India workers' and peasants' party conference. As for the operative line for developing the boycott-Simon-commission movement, the actual

campaign did not take the form of "the election of constituent assembly committees", but militant strikes and hartals in which the rising workers' and peasants' movement played a significant role, heralding a new phase of the national-liberation movement.

Clemens Dutt, in his article "The Indian Struggle for Independence"<sup>116</sup> evaluated the session as opening a "new phase of the movement". He saw the significance of the new phase in "the awakening of revolutionary forces of the masses who are beginning to group themselves under their own independent political leadership expressed through the Workers' and Peasants' Party. This party developed during the last two years through the alliance of leftwing nationalist groups with politically-conscious workingclass elements was one of the most significant features in the history of the past year."

Rajani Palme Dutt in his "Notes of the Month" <sup>117</sup> characterised the adoption of "complete national independence" as the official goal of the Indian National Congress as "a landmark in the history of the Indian national movement". Though he suggested that the danger of a compromise on the basis of "dominion status was not over" and that the resolution may have been adopted "for the purpose of better bargaining with the Simon commission", he nevertheless held that the "strength of the pressure which was able to compel the acceptance of this goal is a powerful expression of the advance of the national movement and its victory is a big step to the clearing and strengthening of national selfconsciousness".

However R. P. Dutt cautioned the Indian national leaders to be sure of the reality and the content of independence. "The reality of independence", he said, "depends upon breaking the power of British capital in India. That is why the real national emancipation of India is inevitably bound up with the social emancipation of the workers and peasants." He suggested: "The demand for independence needs to be combined with the demand for the repu-

116. *Labour Monthly*, March 1928.

117. *Ibid*, June 1928.

diation of foreign debts and expropriation of foreign concessions and capital holdings in India. Then alone will the demand for independence take on its real and living character. This is the next stage to which the national movement needs to advance following on the recognition in principle of the goal of independence." Referring to the new phase of the struggle that was opening in India, he said, "the advancing force of the present situation comes from the growing consciousness and action of the industrial workers... Even more significant the struggle of the workers has already taken on a political as well as economic character. In the demonstrations against the landing of the Simon commission at Bombay on 3 February 1928 in which the British 'labour' representatives had the pleasure of assisting in the shooting down by 'their' soldiers of the Indian workers, the leading role was played by the workers under their own leadership and behind their own slogans. In defiance of the government prohibition, 30,000 workers demonstrated in the streets, led by the central committee of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, and their slogans were: 'Eight-hour day'; 'Living Wage'; 'Down with British Imperialism'; 'Nothing short of independence' and 'Constituent Assembly.' Thus it was pointed out that "3 February 1928 was a powerful first signal of the future form of the national struggle".

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As has already been stated, it was at the Madras session of the Indian National Congress that the communists, functioning through the Workers' and Peasants' Party, for the first time worked as an organised fraction. The manifesto distributed at the session was not in the name of the Communist Party as at the Gauhati session last year, but in the name of the Workers' and Peasants' Party. Its units formed first in Bengal and a little later in Bombay had already made a breakthrough to mass trade-union and political activity. They had initiated a militant trend in the trade-union movement symbolised by the red flag. They were putting forward the program of national-

democratic revolution and giving shape and program to a left wing in the Indian National Congress. They were boldly popularising the lessons of the October socialist revolution in Russia and the achievements of the Soviet Union. The organs of the two parties—*Ganavani* in Bengali and *Kranti* in Marathi had already begun to appear in 1927 though with interruptions. *Kirti* in Punjabi was appearing as a monthly organ of national-revolutionaries. The emergence of the WPP was influencing the left wing in the National Congress on the one hand and the national-revolutionaries whom the British government was denouncing as terrorists on the other. The government was trying to suppress both.

Encouraged by the success of the workers' and peasants' parties in Bengal and in Bombay in achieving a breakthrough to mass political activity, the communists were now planning to form an all-India workers' and peasants' party. It is significant that at Madras, where all the leading communists and WPP activists had come together for the National Congress session, the decision was taken at a secret meeting of the central executive committee of the Communist Party. Six months earlier, the central executive committee of the party had met in Bombay and published its report openly in May. Taking stock of the developments since, the communists decided to develop the Workers' and Peasants Party as an all-India political organisation which will be on the one hand a party of national-democratic revolution and on the other hand will make use of all legal facilities to build a class-conscious trade-union movement and to organise the peasants as well. This was the main content of the decisions taken at the meeting of the CEC of the CPI held in Madras from 28 to 30 December 1927.

The only record available of this meeting are two documents seized by the police from the office of the WPP in Bombay at the time of Meerut arrests and later produced in that case as prosecution exhibits.<sup>118</sup> The first one is a paper entitled "Agenda" and the other is a record of

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118. Meerut Record, P 1237(2) & P 1373 (2).

the main decisions, the latter paper being in the handwriting of Dange and partly of S. V. Ghate. In the case itself, the prosecuted communist leaders, in accordance with the defence policy they had adopted, neither challenged nor confirmed organisational documents. The sessions judge of course refers to this meeting as a part of the conspiracy.<sup>119</sup> Abdul Majid, who was alleged to have received the circular of the meeting dated 12 December 1927 and had replied saying that Gauhar Rahman of Peshawar would not be able to attend, said in his defence statement "As far as I know, no communist conference was held in Madras. I did not attend it"<sup>120</sup> What S. V. Ghate said in his defence statement on this matter deserves to be quoted in full:

'When the party was formed in 1925, I was elected one of its general secretaries. The party issued a manifesto on the hindu-muslim question during the hindu-muslim riots at Calcutta. A manifesto addressed to the Gauhati congress was broadcast. The manifesto was printed in England. A conference of the party was held in 1927. Meetings were held under the auspices of the CPI at Madras and Bombay.'<sup>121</sup>

Here Ghate refers to the conference in 1927. This is the one held in Bombay after which the *Annual Report* was published openly. He refers to the meetings (i.e. public meetings) held under its auspices, but does not refer to the CEC meeting at Madras for reasons given above.

In his reminiscences, written years later (i.e. after independence), K. N. Joglekar records: "Along with the session of the Indian National Congress a CPI session was held in Madras in 1927. K. N. Joglekar, R. S. Nimbkar, S. A. Dange, P. Spratt, S. V. Ghate, Shaukat Usmani, (Abdul) Majid, Ayodhya Prasad attended. The session was held at the house of Singaravelu. Singaravelu was then very active amongst the SI railwaymen. He organised a

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119. Sessions Judgement, Vol I, p 166.

120 Meerut Record, P 312, Majid's statement.

121. Ibid, P 1585, Ghate's statement

railway workers' meeting which I addressed. The rally was largely attended." He also refers to the conference of radical congressmen led by Sambamurthy and J. Nehru, held side by side with the Madras congress, which is an obvious reference to the republican conference referred to earlier.

The list of those who attended the CEC meeting given by K. N. Joglekar tallies more or less with the names appearing in the agenda paper, except for the name of Ayodhya Prasad which was probably not put down as he was making secret trips overseas as a 'khalasi' on ships to keep contact with communists in Europe and Britain. The agenda paper contained the following points: "(1) proposing the president of the meeting; (2) secretary's verbal report; (3) Janakiprasad (Bagerhatta's) resignation; (4) position of members of CP who are members of communal organisations or carrying on communal work to be considered; (5) warning against all and sundry labour organisers passing as communists; (6) statement on Hasrat Mohani's claim as communist and communal leader at the same time; (7) attitude of the party to the latest conference and their resolutions, viz (i) congress resolution on independence, (ii) republican congress; (8) party and paper; (9) method of enlisting membership of CP; (10) any other work allowed by the president."

Dange presided over the meeting on the 29th and 30th. Ghate gave a verbal report as secretary. The central executive took firm action against members who were simultaneously working in or on the journals of a communal organisation. Hasrat Mohani who was simultaneously in the Muslim League was asked to quit the same. But he resigned from the Communist Party. S. D. Hassan, who was working on a communal paper in the Punjab, was "dropped" from the party. Even K. N. Joglekar who was a member of the Brahman Sabha was asked to resign from the same. Other organisational decisions were—the acceptance of the resignation of Bagerhatta. This has already been referred to in the earlier volume. Usmani was elected to the presidium.

The political decisions of the CEC meeting are recorded

in the document<sup>122</sup> which is in the handwriting of S. A Dange and S. V. Ghate. They are as follows:

'It was decided that the formation of an AIWPP was desirable in the near future. That a congress should be held for the purpose at Calcutta within the period 10 February-10 March 1928. Arrangements, invitations, etc. to be left to Muzaffar Ahmad. Invitations to be extended to WPP of Bombay and Bengal, WPP of Punjab (if in existence), managers of *Kirti*, *Mehnatkash*<sup>123</sup> etc. Trade unions of Bengal, possibly individuals or the Republican Party in Madras to send delegates with votes others as non-voting delegates (observers?). Visitors to be charged a small fee.'

"The business of the congress: (1) To establish AIWPP and its committee and offices and to decide upon a centre, (either at) Bombay or Calcutta, for a working committee should work in postal consultation with committee members in other districts.

"(2) To formulate a thesis on the existing situation, international and internal, economic and political and hence to devise a comprehensive program of work and a sketch of future lines of development, in relation to other parties and social groups and organisations.

"(3) To formulate resolutions on organisation of AI party and provincial parties, methods of work, publications, finance, etc.

"Comrades C. G. Shah and S. A. Dange were commissioned to prepare drafts of (2), and Comrade S. Usmani and K. N. Joglekar to prepare plans for (3)."

Other questions discussed at this meeting were: "(1) the question of youth and the relation to student organisation; (2) the question was also discussed whether the Workers' and Peasants' Party should have, apart from individual membership, also collective affiliation of trade unions. The idea was that the affiliated trade union 'pays a small fee' and in return receives the services of the

122. Ibid, P 1373 (2).

123. Urdu weekly edited by Abdul Majid —Ed.

party for propaganda work and of its members for educational work etc."

"The immediate task" the meeting decided "was to push ahead the boycott-Simon-commission campaign and that trade unions should pass resolutions for one-day strike on the occasion of the landing of the commission". It also called for the exposure of the vacillating attitude of the congress leaders on this question of the boycott movement.

Finally, it is interesting to compare the list of those who attended this meeting with the list of the members of the CEC given at the end of the printed *Annual Report* published after the meeting held in Bombay in May 1927. We find that Bagerhatta resigned; Krishnaswamy Iyengar was not present. He was expelled from the party in the next meeting of the CEC at Calcutta in December 1928. Nothing is known about Mistry who is listed as treasurer. Hasrat Mohani did not attend. He was expelled later in the meeting at Calcutta. S. D. Hassan was dropped. S. N. Tagore, who was listed as a member of the CEC then, was in Berlin and later in Moscow. He was a delegate at the sixth world congress of the Communist International held in Moscow in the autumn of 1928. He separated himself from the party in 1933 after his return from abroad. Abdul Halim was probably not present due to illness. Gauhar Rahman Darveshi was not able to attend as reported earlier by Majid. All the rest and Ayodhya Prasad and P. Spratt attended. This shows the continuity of the function of this leading body of the CPI since its foundation in 1925 in Kanpur.

## I. Working Council of the CEC

### 1. RESOLUTIONS

(1) This meeting of the council of the central executive accepts the invitation of second communist congress from Lahore and resolves that the congress be held in the month of March between 17 and 20 March.

The committee further authorises the reception committee to organise funds for the conference and requests the committee to send to the general secretaries a copy of their bylaws immediately.

(2) The general secretaries be authorised to issue the agenda of the conference, with the consent of the president-elect, to the members of the executive of the present year and to the newly-elected members by the provincial centres. The provincial secretaries be requested to send the list of the members authorised by their centres to join the subjects committee which will make the executive for the coming year.

(3) Whereas the Communist Party of India has now established itself formally, though the organisational work must still continue, it is necessary that the party adopts a more complete constitution for its guidance for the coming year, and appoints the following gentlemen to draft a constitution to be placed before the next congress. The committee will invite suggestions from other members also

The following were elected members of the above committee: (a) the president, (b) both the general secretaries, (c) Muzaffar Ahmad, (d) S. D. Hassan.

(4) Whereas in the opinion of this committee the internment of Comrade M. Shafiq immediately after his release from 3 years' imprisonment by the Frontier government is a repression unparalleled in the history of civilised government, this committee strongly condemns the action of the North-West Frontier government and places on record the services rendered by Comrade Shafiq to the cause of communism in India and foreign lands.

(5) The committee further condemns the action of the North-West Frontier government in restricting the liberty of Comrade Gauhar Rahman, and treating him as an ordinary criminal.

(6) The committee expresses its full sympathy with the popular movement for liberty in China and Dutch Indies. The committee further congratulates the British miners on their heroic struggle and historical role they are playing in the cause of a proletarian revolution in England.

(7) Whereas in the opinion of this committee the action of Comrade Saklatvala in sending the copy of his letter to the secretary of reception committee to the press is quite objectionable and a great blow to the cause of communism in India, this committee strongly protests against his action.

The committee further repudiates the allegations made by him against the party.

(8) Comrade Muzaffar Ahmad was finally elected unanimously for the presidency of the ensuing congress.

## II. India at the Brussels Congress of the League against Imperialism

### 2. RESOLUTION ON INDIA

This congress accords its warm support to the Indian movement for the complete freedom of India, and is of the opinion that the complete liberation of India from foreign domination and all kinds of exploitation is an essential step in the full emancipation of the peoples of the world.

This congress trusts that the peoples and workers of other countries will fully cooperate in this task and will specially take effective steps to prevent the dispatch of foreign troops to India and the retention of an army of occupation in that country.

This congress further trusts that the Indian national movement will base its program on the full emancipation of the peasants and workers of India, without which there can be no real freedom, and will cooperate with the movements for emancipation in other parts of the world.

### 3. JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE INDIAN AND CHINESE DELEGATIONS

For more than three thousand years the people of India and China were united by the most intimate cultural ties. From the days of Buddha to the end of the Mughal period and the beginning of British domination in India this friendly intercourse continued uninterrupted.

After the East India Company had, by intrigue and force, secured its firm hold on the greater part of India, the English began looking for new sources of revenue and new markets. They not only introduced poppy cultivation into areas where food had previously been grown, but also thrust Indian opium on the unwilling Chinese people by force of arms. Since that infamous Opium War of 1840-41, Indian mercenary troops have been sent again and again to China in support of British capitalist brigandage in that country. For 87 years Indian troops have been permanently stationed as policemen in Hongkong, Shanghai, etc. Time and again they have been used to shoot down Chinese workers and have thus created ill-will in China against the people of India. Even as we make this declaration, Indian troops are again on their way to China in an attempt to crush the Chinese revolution.

With the strengthening of British imperialism, India was cut off more and more from intercourse with China and in their cultural and intellectual isolation the Indian people have now become completely ignorant of the condition of China.

It is this extreme ignorance that makes it difficult today to organise effective means to prevent India's men and manpower from being used for the enslavement of the Chinese people. We think it urgent and essential that active propaganda should be carried on in India to educate the people regarding China and to arouse them to the necessity of immediate action. We must now resume the ancient personal, cultural and political relations between the two peoples. British imperialism, which in the past has kept

us apart and done us so much injury, is now the very force that is uniting us in a common endeavour to overthrow it.

We trust that the leaders of the Indian movement will do all in their power to coordinate their struggle with that of the Chinese people so that by simultaneously engaging British imperialism on two of its most vital fronts, China may receive active support in her present struggle, and the final victory of both peoples may be secured.

#### 4. JOINT DECLARATION OF BRITISH, INDIAN AND CHINESE DELEGATES

We, the undersigned members of the British, Indian, and Chinese delegations, consider that the task of all working class forces in imperialist countries is:

(1) To fight for full emancipation side by side with the national forces in oppressed countries in order to secure complete independence wherever such national forces so desire.

(2) To oppose all forms of coercion against colonial peoples.

(3) To vote against all credits, naval, military, and air, for the maintenance of armed force to be used against oppressed nations.

(4) To expose horrors of imperialism to the civil and military populations.

(5) To expose imperialistic policy in the light of the workingclass struggle for freedom.

In relation to the immediate situation in China:

(1) We demand the immediate withdrawal of all armed forces from Chinese territory and waters.

(2) We urge the need of direct action, including strikes and the imposition of the embargo to prevent the movement of munitions and troops either to India or China or from India to China.

(3) That estimates relating either to warlike preparations or to war should be voted against.

(4) That in the event of armed intervention or open war, every effort shall be made within the labour movement to use every weapon possible in the workingclass struggle to prevent hostilities.

(5) We demand the unconditional recognition of the nationalist government, the abolition of the unequal treaties and of extraterritorial rights and the surrender of foreign concessions.

(6) Finally, in the interests of the trade-union and labour movements in Britain, India and China, we pledge ourselves to work for their immediate, close and active cooperation.

G. Lansbury, MP, Ellen Wilkinson, MP, John Beckett, MP, Fenner Brockway (ILP), John Stokes, JP, Harry Pollitt, A. MacManus, W. Rust, H. Liau (EC of Kuomintang), Lu Chung-ling (general of National Revolutionary Army of China), Jawaharlal Nehru (Indian National Congress), S. O. Davies, R. Bridgeman, Helen Crawford.

## 5. RESOLUTION OF THE TRADE-UNION DELEGATES

The undersigned delegates, representing 17 trade-union organisations with 7,962,000 members of all races and taking part in the international congress against colonial oppression and imperialism held in Brussels from 10 to 15 February, hereby declare their complete solidarity with all the oppressed people of the world, struggling for their liberation from the yoke of imperialism, and pledge themselves to support them with all their strength and with all the means in their power.

At the moment, when British imperialists are daily increasing the dispatch and the transport of arms, ammunition, war-materiel and troops to China, at a moment, when

they are sending out their airplanes and battleships to crush the Chinese revolution, the undersigned representatives affirm that the only effective means for the people of the oppressing countries to prevent the imperialist war which is being prepared, is the preparation and the international organisation of the boycott against the transport of arms and ammunition, and of the general strike.

To this end it is necessary to undertake in each country an active campaign for popularising the adoption of partial strikes and of the general strike. The decisions taken and resolutions passed by the congress against colonial oppression and imperialism should be published in the trade-union press of the whole world and widely circulated among the workers in the towns and in the country.

In view of the permanent threat of wars created by the rivalries of the great imperialist powers in the world, and in order to give effective support to the struggle of the peoples for the right of free selfdetermination, the trade-union delegates to the congress against colonial oppression and imperialism declare that international trade-union solidarity is more indispensable now than ever. They appeal to the Federation of Trade Unions of Amsterdam, to the Red International of Trade Unions of Moscow, as well as to all the other organisations not affiliated to the existing internationals, and demand in the name of the 7,962,000 trade-unionists whom they represent, that an agreement be rapidly arrived at for the creation of a single trade-union international embracing the unions of the five continents and the workers of all races and of all colours.

A single trade-union international alone can constitute a solid dam against which all the attempts to organise imperialist war will be destroyed.

The undersigned representatives urgently call upon the trade unions of all countries to put an end definitely to the distinction that still exists between the white and the coloured workers. All workers without distinction should be grouped locally, nationally and internationally in the same trade-union organisations.

The trade-union right of coalition, of assembly, of strike, of freedom of speech and of the press must be obtained for all the workers of colonial and semicolonial countries.

*International Press Correspondence*  
Vol. 7, No. 19, 11 November 1927

## 6. AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND FOR NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE !

### MANIFESTO OF THE BRUSSELS CONGRESS

The representatives of the oppressed peoples and of the working class who are assembled together in the congress from all parts of the earth in order to guarantee their elementary rights and the mutual development of brotherly fellowship, have resolved:

A position, in which hundreds of millions of men are condemned culturally and violently to suffer material and moral stagnation and to remain the involuntary victims of foreign capitalist exploitation, whereby struggle to which this exploitation gives rise, constantly threatens the peace of the nations with new and bloody conflicts—this dangerous, critical, debasing and barbarous position can really no longer be tolerated. History has expressed its irrevocable sentence upon this shame, which as already lasted for centuries, and which in our own epoch has been strengthened afresh by the policy of imperialism and has attained dimensions hitherto undreamed of. For hundreds of years the unprotected, cruel and relentless exploitation of the overseas Asian, African and American peoples and races has always been one of the chief sources from which European capitalism has fed itself. The indescribable yoking, enslavement and compulsory labour, the simple destruction and not only that, exploitation of all nations and races so

that their very name did not remain, was necessary in order to construct the proud fabric first of all of European and then of European-American capitalism and of its so very cultured material and spiritual civilisation. However the young states which arose on the other side of the ocean partly on the grave of other nations, of other civilisations and partly through amalgamation with native-born peoples, were compelled to defend their right to independent national existence against the aggressive selfseeking egoism of the capitalist mother-countries by war. And it was chiefly only the mutual hostilities of these capitalist mother-countries which provided the possibility for this struggle for national independence to be crowned with success.

Every new capitalist state which appeared upon the arena of history, as happened at the end of the last century, in the case of Germany and later Italy, considered it necessary to pursue itself the course of oppressing and enslaving colonial peoples. No single capitalist state considered itself to be an equally qualified capitalist power until it had brought other weaker defenceless nations into subjection to itself. This subjection was characterised by a complete hierarchy, by a graduated system which leads from simple *de facto* control, from the veiled forms of dependence to unveiled slavery, and latterly also in geographically distant countries to the traditional forms of medieval feudalism and bodily ownership.

As the present time of the highest development of capitalist nations, at this epoch of imperialism, this barbarous cruel system has reached its highest pitch of perfection. The surplus of capitalist accumulation in the new shape of finance-capital categorically required the final subjection of all parts of the world which are not yet capitalist. The end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th brought with them the final division of the world between a small group of imperialist powers. A few great powers and in them a few individuals, supported by the strength of accumulated capital and upon the strength of the bayonets and cannons of the most modern and perfect murder-machine, began to control the world. The con-

quest and enslavement of some nations led to the conquest and enslaving of others. The struggle of the groups of imperialist powers for the last stretches of territory which had not yet been finally parcelled out, for a fresh division of the world led finally to the greatest catastrophe and to the greatest crime in the history of humanity, to the world war.

But this terrible catastrophe which drenched two continents with blood, did not destroy that awful system of which it was itself the fruit. The imperialist powers have clung like limpets to the booty, which threatened to slip from their hands and which they had so dearly purchased. The murder of millions of men, among whom were hundreds of thousands of colonial slaves from India and from the French-African colonies, who on all the fields of battle had fallen in the interests of the slaveowners, did not lead to any diminution of the number of the powers, which are laying claim to colonial booty. Fascist Italy hastened to take the place of Germany and clamours ever more loudly and more shrilly for a share of the colonial territories, and even in Germany itself the privileged classes, which have restored their economic and political power and have already forgotten the bitter taste of foreign rule, are now striving to win for themselves the right to oppress other peoples. That is the inexcusable logic of that system under which mankind is suffocating. Less than ever can the present economic system, which has exhausted the European masses during the war, continue to exist and to grow without colonial excess profits and without the subjection of whole nations and whole continents. The less the old capitalism is in the position to ensure the well-being of the European masses, and above all of the proletarian masses, the more is it compelled to seek in foreign continents for markets for its goods and its capital which can be controlled by force. The development of the monopoly of capital which was extraordinarily accelerated by the war, changed the small clique of the privileged classes of a few great powers—above all of Anglo-Saxon powers—into masters and despots of the whole world.

The world war and its consequences clearly showed, however, that imperialist-colonial capitalism, and capitalism in general was its own gravedigger. The explosion of the world war not only revealed the amazing internal dissensions by which capitalist society was torn, but millions of men had to lose their lives in the attempt to adjust and smooth over these dissensions. This is not all that the world war revealed. In their inexcusable struggle against each other the imperialist powers were themselves forced to announce the slogan of selfdetermination. The oppressed, enslaved peoples took the imperialists at their word so to speak. The belated and deceptive concessions, which were followed by a relapse into still more cruel oppression, all the methods of the cruel unsystematic patriarchal rule of postwar imperialism threw the masses which had already been upset by the war and by the whole economic development, into a still greater state of unrest. A mighty wave of the movement for national emancipation passed over immense regions of Asia, Africa and America. The banner of the revolt against slavery and conquest was raised in China and in India, in Egypt as in Northwest Africa, in Indonesia and also in the Philippines. The hatred of slavery and oppression, the longing for a better, freer and cultured life awoke in all corners of the exploited world.

After the world war, the national world freedom movement received a mighty push forward from the Russian revolution, which established the power of the proletariat and the peasant, which did not rest on exploitation and led to the transformation of the former robber-empire of Russia which had oppressed hundreds of people, into a free federation of equal peoples. The greatest house of oppression in the world has been irreparably overthrown. The historical example of the workers' state which rests upon the free league of nations and races, which has been built up upon the ruins of this house of oppression, lights up like a torch the path of the struggle for freedom of the oppressed and enslaved nations.

No one can throttle again this mighty will for freedom and independence. Only fools and miserable philistines and

routine men can believe that the civilisation today and the whole future of the world can be confined to Europe and the United States of America. The national freedom movement of the Asian, African and American peoples is in its extent a world miracle. And it alone—organically connected and associated in growth with the struggle for freedom of the proletariat of the old capitalist society—will be able to change our planet into a civilised world. It alone will open a new chapter in the history of the world through the liberation of the world—the history of which for the first time will be a real world history, the history of mankind throughout the whole world. Already the Chinese revolution alone, the movement for freedom on the part of 400,000,000 oppressed people—is a fact of world historical importance, which throws many of the "great" outstanding facts of European history completely into the shade. Let the rulers of the old small part of the world renounce their antiquated illusions which no longer correspond to the present time, and which today inevitably make a miserable and ridiculous impression. The whole world is moving and the smallest jolt in any part of it causes a mighty repercussion over an immense extent of territory. The example of tiny Nicaragua showed that lasting opposition even against the most powerful giant is possible, thanks to the publicity which this opposition awakes among a number of stronger peoples which are equally concerned with the necessity of defending their own independence.

Without the most bitter opposition, however, the imperialist oppressors will not give up their booty. The young Turkish republic had to use the whole of its strength in a new war. She had to transfer her capital to the interior of the country in order to protect her independence from the attacks of the robbers. Already since the world war we have witnessed new colonial wars in Morocco and Syria. Under pressures of the national movement Great Britain has finally found itself obliged to grant, on paper, a kind of independence and selfgovernment to Egypt. Britain continues, however, with the help of the military forces which have been left behind in this country, to

violate the rights of the Egyptian people in the most brutal manner, and clings all the tighter to Sudan, which has never forgotten the bloodstained, heroic deeds of Lord Kitchener.

In order to maintain their power, and at the same time in the name of socalled "prestige", one of the most hypocritical, one of the most base and shameless of imperialist conceptions, the robbers of today, who are so proud of their culture and of their christianity, show themselves capable, now as formerly, of the most inhuman cruelties and most barbarous acts of revenge. Who can forget the recent cruel dealing of the Dutch planters-government with the rebels of Dutch India? There compulsory labour and slavery still exist. Who can forget the bestial cannon salvo at a distance of six metres upon unarmed Chinese at Wanhsien, by whose blood the Yangtsekiang river was coloured red? Who does not remember the cannibal and triumphant tone of the descriptions given by the leading organs of the press of the highly cultured English nation, of this unheard of massacre? Who in India has forgotten with what brutality on unarmed crowd on the marketplace of Amritsar, of which the gates had been closed, was fired upon? Who has forgotten that general O'Duyer received an honourable distinction from the adherents of the brutal proceedings?

The necessity of restoring the disturbed foundation of economic life, the fear of revolution and the exhaustion of the world war, which has not yet been overcome, compelled the imperialist powers to maintain some kind of peace in their mutual relations. For this reason "pacifism" has become the favoured expression both of European and of American diplomacy, which had prepared the greatest war in the history of mankind. "Pacifism", is, however, not an exportable commodity, it serves so to speak for the internal need of imperialist powers. It is not applicable to those countries which imperialism regards as its colonies or semicolonies. Here, on the contrary, the unveiled and unrestricted violence of the mailed fist is dominating, here European-American militarism can make its highest show and prepare for big battles.

The official European-American pseudopacifism is the expression of these facts (except those already mentioned), that by the wedge of world antagonisms which separate the imperialist powers from each other, the principal stage of world war has been removed from west to east—to the Pacific ocean. Here on the shores of the great ocean we find the most important and the most valuable objects of imperial interest, and the struggles going on on both sides of the ocean in which the armed forces of the imperialist powers and their assistants are engaged, are only the preliminary fights which announce the great collusion which brings intense misery to mankind.

British diplomacy is constantly, indefatigably and energetically busy drawing other imperialist powers into an armed conflict with China. After the visit to Rome of the worst adventurer of our time, the hero of Gallipoli, Mr Churchill, to that other ruthless adventurer, Mussolini, fascist Italy, though it has very little interest in China, is doing its utmost, naturally, to raise its prestige and to get sooner or later some other advantage in the world. It is trying its best to offer its services to England by sending dreadnoughts to the Chinese waters. England itself is actually in a condition of war with the forces fighting in China on behalf of their liberation represented by the Canton government and the Kuomintang.

Only the success of the South Chinese armies, only the fear of complete defeat, only the misfortune of the first effort to create an armed conflict against revolutionary China, have compelled the London government to enter into negotiations with the Canton government. At the same time, however, while these negotiations are in progress, they support the worst enemies of Chinese freedom (as one of the worst examples, we mention Chang Tso-lin who has transformed himself from a simple robber and political dandy to a military "satrap") and fearful campaign has been set on foot against the Soviet Union, the only friend of young China. But above all, these negotiations are accompanied by extensive trans-

portation of military troops to Shanghai which the victorious armies are approaching.

The whole of the working class in England is already protesting energetically against this new war danger. The national struggle for the freedom of this greatest nation of Asia is threatened to be strangled and there is the danger that a new crusade will begin also against Soviet Russia. This because in the eyes of the imperialist world there is no greater crime than moral solidarity with the liberation movement of an Asiatic nation.

On the other side of the ocean North-American imperialism is, by open hostility, securing for itself power over all transport routes which will enable it to mobilise its naval forces. It threatens the independence of Mexico, where for the first time democratic power has established itself and makes efforts to protect the sovereignty of the country against the shameless and continual aggressions of foreign powers, especially against that of North-American monopolistic capital.

Thanks to the protests in democratic circles in the United States, to the growing indignation of Latin-American countries upon which North-American capital would also force its domination, and above all, thanks to the firm attitude of the Mexican government itself, Kellogg and Collidge have been forced into a provisional retreat.

It would be ridiculous, however, to be blind to the danger of war which is threatened here. The imperialist powers buy and sell whole nations and populated continents like cattle. Always and everywhere, we see the same picture—on the one side dozens and hundreds of millions who strive for independence and freedom, and on the other side small but powerful minorities of exploiters who strive to secure extra profits in underhand ways of privileged trade, by export of capital and by monopolist control of the most important raw material, such as cotton, oil, copper, iron, etc.

Military action in Europe has ended. Before the war recommences on the plains of Europe and the coast of the

Pacific ocean, still wet with blood, it will be continued in one form or another in Asia, Africa and Central America where already a collision is in course of preparation.

No pacifist alarm will mask the cruel and shameful fact that the world will not get out of the war conditions and that slavery and exploitation of the colonial and semi-colonial countries will remain the ceaseless source of war.

Under these conditions, this Brussels conference has decided to found the "League Against Imperialism and for National Independence". We announce to all oppressed people and all oppressed classes of the dominating nations, the foundation of this League. We appeal to all who do not profit from the oppression of others and who do not live on the fruits of this oppression, and to all who hate modern slavery and are longing for their own freedom and the freedom of their fellowmen, to affiliate to us and to support us.

The oppressed and enslaved people have confidence above all, in the support of the advanced working class of all countries who, like themselves, have nothing to lose but their chains. But also the broadest masses of peasants and the mass of the middle class and intellectuals in the dominating countries are also victims of the suppression of colonial countries because this oppression at best, only brings to them miserable sops on the one hand while on the other hand it brings to them the increasing burden of militarism accompanied by all the horrors of warfare. The emancipation of the oppressed colonial peoples, vassals and those subjugated by violence, will not diminish the great accomplishments and possibilities of the material and spiritual culture of mankind, but will increase them on a scale never yet experienced. And in this sense the oppressed and enslaved nations, which represent the overwhelming majority of mankind like the proletariat, can conquer the world, the world of the future.

***Oppressed Peoples and Oppressed Nations, Unite!***

*International Press Correspondence*  
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## 7. RESOLUTION ON INDIA

The general council of the League against Imperialism declares its complete solidarity with the Indian people in the latter's opposition to the British government's proposal of a commission of the British parliament to investigate India's fitness for selfgovernment.

The appointment of this commission of the exploiters to grant "reforms" to the peoples whom they exploit is nothing but an impudent farce, and the general council heartily supports the Indian national movement's resolve to boycott the commission.

The general council notes with disgust that the British Labour Party leaders and members of parliament have made common cause with the British imperialists on this question, by supporting the conservative government's proposal of a commission and by endorsing without any but the weakest support to comrade Saklatvala in parliament, the participation of two labour representatives.

The general council declares that this open united front of the British capitalists and British labour leaders in defence of British imperialism which has no parallel since the black days of August 1914, is as harmful to the workers of the oppressor countries, since they are exploited by the same ruling class.

The League against Imperialism pledges the whole-hearted support of all its adherent organisations and sections to the Indian national movement in this struggle. At the same time it urges all genuine enemies of imperialist oppression in India to concentrate on rallying the masses around the positive slogan of complete independence for India—the sole real threat to the power of British imperialism—and on the election of a constituent assembly to consider the entire question of the political future of India, which should be prepared by the creation of local committees, mass demonstrations and the widest possible participation of the masses of the people generally.

### III. Shapurji Saklatvala in India

#### 8. GANDHI AND LABOUR ORGANISATION

The growing urgency of the labour question in India, reflected in the greater attention now paid to it in the nationalist press and in nationalist speeches, has compelled Gandhi also to define more clearly his attitude in respect of it. In particular, the open letter addressed to him by comrade Saklatvala has made it necessary for him to declare himself. It has, of course, been obvious for a long time past, in practice if not admittedly, that he is on the side of the employers in the class struggle, if only by the denial of its existence, but his recent admissions in defining his attitude towards labour organisation bring out his class position very clearly and are therefore worthy of some notice. In the first place, it is to be noticed that Gandhi is not opposed to labour organisation, but as he says, "as in everything else, I want its organisation on Indian lines, or if you will my lines". What then are the distinguishing features of Gandhi's specifically "Indian" type of labour organisation. The kind of organisation that he advocates appears from his statements and practice to be characterised by four features. Firstly, it is built up on the lines of class harmony:

"I do not regard capital to be the enemy of labour. I hold their coordination to be perfectly possible" (Reply to Saklatvala, 17 March 1927).

"We should not begin by blaming the capitalists" (Interview, 24 March 1927).

"One word as to policy. It is not anticapitalistic. The idea is to take from capital labour's due share and no

more, and this not by paralysing capital. (Letter to Saklatvala, 10 May 1927).

Secondly, the primary object is to free the worker from his vices and to make him a better workman. At the annual meeting of the Ahmedabad Labour Union last October, Gandhi advised the workers to work in the mills as if they were the owners. In the interview abovementioned he declared: "I should begin by real education of the worker in making him feel his own dignity and power and persuade him to give up the vices of drink, etc. to which he is addicted." Thirdly, Gandhi's labour organisation is to be kept away from contact with the independent labour and trade-union movement, because "the labourers have no mind of their own when it comes to matters of national policy or even the general welfare of labour itself", and the existing movement is disunited and often 'under selfish and highly unscrupulous guidance'. Thus, he is convinced that "an all-India union can only exist on paper". Finally, his labour organisations must be kept away from politics:

"Its direct aim is not in the least degree political. I have not therefore the remotest idea of exploiting labour or organising it for any direct political end. It will be of itself a political power of first-class importance when it becomes a selfexisting unit. Labour in my opinion must not become a pawn in the hands of the politician on the political chess-board" (Letter to Saklatvala).

These characteristics give a fairly clear idea of what Gandhi conceives to be a specially Indian form of labour organisation. It is interesting to compare them with the features exhibited by the socalled company unions or yellow unions organised by the employers in the United States and in Europe in order to counteract the power of the independent labour unions and to prevent the workers from joining the latter. In the first character, of class-collaboration, the two are identical. Strangely enough, the same thing applies to all the other features. In both cases, the unions are organised on welfare lines in order to get the most out of the workers, they are carefully kept aloof from the wicked socialistic or bolshevistic trade

unions, and they are also strictly forbidden to meddle with politics. By what miracle have all the characteristically Indian or, if you like, gandhist features been already anticipated and adopted by the capitalists of western civilisation? Can it really be true that Gandhi's ideas of labour organisation, instead of being specially Indian, are simply the ordinary ideas of the capitalist employer who is ready enough to give the workers what he considers their "due share" (as long as it leaves handsome profits for himself) but anxious above all to prevent his wage-slaves from acting for themselves? The question must be asked as to what is the difference between Mahatma Gandhi's labour organisation and that of the most antilabour capitalist employer. In externals they are both exactly alike, and that is in itself the most damning indictment of Gandhi's views.

*The Masses of India*  
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## 9. INDIA AND BRITAIN

SHAPURJI SAKLATVALA

I have been to India and I have come back. Whilst I was there events were daily happening which would make me pity Great Britain more than India, and after I return I see events happening here which, without the imperialist hold over India, would not have been possible and which are dragging the British working class on their downward path.

The British race has a reputation for being conservative on the whole and (though several of its members wear different political labels and trademarks), has betrayed its conservatism at every turn of events. At the same time

the history of the world and the modern geography of the world give you instances that the British race is enterprising, is daring, and possesses many men and women of revolutionary spirit. I often ask myself, are the British, and in their innermost nature really conservative temperamentally or do they appear conservative as an economic effect of tremendous advantage gained by them through their spirit of enterprise and revolutionary temperament? I feel more inclined towards this latter belief.

Somehow or other, large numbers of members of the working class have been permitted to believe in the possibility of a stationary life, even in inevitable and gradual progress coming whilst you wait. With the qualities of daring an enterprise and unscrupulousness of method of some of her sons, the economic resources of this island country became so vast in a comparatively poor world that men and women began to feel that their share in the distribution of it, however unjust or unfair it is, would be ample enough for all purposes of life, and this spirit of complacency sustained the whole of the nation for over a century, till it has created a state of mind much akin to the fatalism of their oriental brethren.

#### CHANGED CONDITIONS

The world's conditions have changed. Capitalism has grown, capitalistic competition has become keener, class interest has become sharper, imperialism has stepped in as a powerful instrument with which to undermine the standard of life in Britain, and yet through all these changes, in spite of the thunder and quaking shocks of the revolution of Russia and mighty changes in Europe, the habit of the mind of the Briton still drags on in the same groove. He does not realise that what appeared to him to be a stationary condition was nothing but continuous replenishment from inexhaustible sources of loot from abroad. There is neither an assured continuity of economic or political rights, much less and inevitable gradual progress.

The neglect of the British working class to study British imperialism in its proper light is leading to the ac-

compliment of two processes, namely, a rapid britainising of a capitalist master-class in India and a rapid indiaising of the large working class in Britain. In Britain within the class struggle one sees gigantic efforts on the part of the workers to level up their conditions of life and their political rights to those of the upper classes. Then one travels in India and sees a picture of sharp contrast, a transplanted life of modern European luxury and comfort and a little away from it a stagnant life of the human being, even as it used to be a thousand years ago.

Take your worst slums, your most congested lodging-houses and yet you cannot conceive of that breakdown mud-hut, to enter which even a stature of 5 feet of humanity has got to nearly double up. There is no other ventilation or opening for light, and there is even nothing to see inside these huts, which are invariably completely unfurnished. I am not talking now of villages; I am talking of large industrial centres like Nagpur and Kanpur where exist cotton mills more flourishing than most cotton mills in Lancashire, and where several thousand workers are still consigned to these death-traps.

#### CAPITALIST GRIP IN INDIA

You struggle here by forming organisations, conducting agitations and fighting for various rights to improve the health of the workingclass population and to reduce their death-rate. Then one goes in India, and there is to be seen openly modern western industrialism, under European or Indian capitalist control, barefacedly worsening the health conditions of the workers, increasing the toll of death till infantile mortality which normally in India would be as high as nearly 20 per 1000, reaches the appalling figure of 600 to 800 per 1000 amongst children born to parents working in factories. Poverty, misery, human degradation seem to be a rightful heritage of the workers in the new industries in the east. The people out there seem to accept it with philosophical calm. The westernised Indian himself looks upon it as something that matters neither seriously nor immediately and which he seriously believes would be remedied as soon as poli-

tical power is seized by him from the foreign intruder. He does not realise that any nation, in order to wrench power from a foreign conqueror or oppressor, would require national strength and consciousness of tremendous dimensions and this could not be obtained and consolidated without the workers and the peasants in his land being well organised.

On the other hand, in order to alleviate the mental agony of his suffering poor, or simply through the accustomed unfeelingness of the capitalist profiteer, the educated Indian tries to instil a philosophical contentment in the workers and the peasants and to prevent as far as possible any selfconsciousness dawning upon them. Thus is accomplished with success a vast experiment of the British imperialist of producing modern goods and services of public utility through human agency at a cost incomparably lower than at home. He also succeeds in personal domination by keeping large masses of humanity as bond-slaves, rigorously tied to their jobs through the necessity of staving off starvation and through the severity of legislative enactments.

In the midst of this process some of us cried out against it in Britain, but in vain, to tell the Briton that his immediate task lay in levelling up the conditions of his fellow-workers in India. But the appeal failed to touch the British worker. His leaders and his organisations worked like machines that were invented and perfected before the advent of economic imperialism and peril, and proved incapable of devoting themselves to alter their conditions.

#### LEVELLING DOWN THE BRITISH WORKERS

An almost conceited view was taken that the low level of the Indian was well deserved and that the higher level of the British workers was something that was permanently secure by their own merit. The shrewd capitalist class on the other hand awaited stabilisation of conditions till the difference between two standards of human life under its control were well marked and were capable of being brought to play their part under one and the same com-

mon imperial commercialism. Then, by exerting the ordinary pressure of a competitive system of life he compels the British worker to level down to the economic position of the Indian worker, which process will naturally continue till a common level is reached, either one as low as that of the Indian, or one as high as that to which the British organisations assist the Indian workers to reach.

For the last four years the cry of the Indian workers went out unheeded by British ears to secure for them trade-union rights similar to their own and save them from proposals which were not conferring special rights for the Indian workers but which were tightening the bonds of serfdom upon them.

Here once again the British worker dreamt that his own position was secure for ever up to a certain stage, and it would be the look out of the Indian worker to safely reach that stage of advancement. However under economic imperialism such dreams are soon shattered and to-day the challenge goes forth to the British workers to level down to the serfdom of the Indian workers. I see therefore two rapid developments, the britainising of a master-class in India and the indianising of the working class of Britain. To me it is as clear as daylight that the primary duty of the British workers is to form an international solidarity with the Indian and oriental workers and to level them up for the sake of securing a world standard and not to look upon such an act of solidarity as a mere spasmodic expression of internationalism or an act of secondary charity from the stronger to the weaker group.

More words are useless and unnecessary; events will prove the correctness or otherwise of this forecast.

*The Labour Monthly*

June 1927, pp 363-64

Text from Meerut Record

P 703

## 10. WHY IS THERE SO MUCH FEAR OF THE COMMUNISTS ?

Comrade Saklatvala is a communist. Some years ago while speaking about the Union Jack he said that that wretched rag was an emblem of slavery. An attack was made on him in parliament for that statement (lit: sentence) of his. On account of this statement he was not given a passport to go to America. He secured a passport to come to India as the brain (or head) of the British capitalists was in a state of negligence somewhere. Government must have had a faint hope that Saklatvala would forget his communism on seeing the strength of the doctrine of Gandhi or it might have been the design of government that this out-and-out communist would speak something at random and he would be shown the atmosphere of jail by trapping him in (the clutches) of the law. But nothing of the kind happened. On the contrary he came and went away (from India) and stimulated progress of the communist movement (lit: gave the movement the pace of a big cart which was going at the pace of a small cart). Saklatvala had a mind to attend the Madras congress and he wanted to come again (to India) with a view to taking the Indian political movement out of the whirlpool of the old-fashioned politicians (lit: those wearing pagris and phetas) and strengthening it with enthusiasm and strength of the revolutionary principles of the young generation and rearing on a new foundation the slackening movement for swaraj. Government had heard murmuring sounds of this. It is but natural that government should be so disposed that they would tolerate ten swarajists but could not tolerate this single communist. On careful consideration and on the recommendation of the government of India the passport of Saklatvala was cancelled.

The government is day by day getting very much annoyed with the communists. Government had paid no heed to it till the noncooperation movement had not reached (the stage of) refusal to pay taxes. There may not be more than twenty-five communists in Bombay, still there have been three police raids upon them and

strict orders have been issued to the postal department that they should first take hold of (lit: confiscate) any book or letter addressed to any communist and then give it back at the sweet (lit: rosy) will of the government. The communists are carrying on their agitation in an open manner in broad day light. Why is then so much strict vigilance exercised over them?

The reason is this that the roots of the British government will not last for a day once the people get to understand communism. The communists have the backing of all the awakened workers of the world. The religion, race and family, affairs and ideals of communists all the world over are the same. The British government gives more trouble to the communists than to any (lit: all) other political party in India because communism shows new ideals to the poor, the miserable, the unemployed and the starving and shows them the new path of making (an honest) living and new means of happiness. And it is on this account that Saklatvala and the communist books and newspapers are not allowed to come to India. They do not want the (very) name of communism to be mentioned. It is a matter for regret that even our Indian newspapers and leaders are showering (lit: giving) abuses on (lit: to) communism and refusing to publish their articles and (thus) helping this highhanded policy of government.

*Kranti*, 10 September 1927  
S. Ezekiel's official translation from Marathi in  
Meerut Record

## IV. Workers' and Peasants' Party in Bombay and Calcutta

### 11. WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' PARTY FORMED IN BOMBAY

(Excerpt)

A meeting of the Congress Labour Party, which is the name of a group in the Bombay provincial congress committee, was held lately at the Congress House, when it was unanimously decided to change the name of this group and rename it as the Workers' and Peasants' Party. A program representing the immediate demands of the workers and peasants was adopted and office-bearers were elected, Dhundiraj Thengdi being the president, S. S. Mirajkar, secretary, Jhabvala and S. V. Ghate as members of the executive committee and Pendse, Joglekar, Nimbkar and J. B. Patel as group leaders in charge of Congress, trade unions, education and peasants activities. S. S. Mirajkar, secretary of the party, requests that all correspondence should be sent in his name at 2/3 Khandke Buildings, Dadar, Bombay-14... (Here follows a brief summary of the program given in the next document).

Meerut Record

P 851

From *Bombay Chronical*

24 February 1927

## 12. THE WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' PARTY

Whereas the government of India, representing the interest of imperialism, exist to maintain the exploitation and political subjection of all classes of India, 95 per cent of whom are peasants, workers and middle classes of India, and has shown itself to be in opposition to the promotion of their interests, and

Whereas the National Congress and the parties within it, as well as, the liberals, independents, and other non-congress parties, while at times advocating the improvement of the conditions of the masses, have shown in practice a complete lack of interest in the political, economic and social needs of the peasantry and working class, and by their actions have proved themselves to be parties promoting the interests of imperial and Indian capitalism, and

Whereas the peasantry, constituting the bulk of the population, suffer exploitation in three main directions, by excessive taxation, by high rents, and by the exactions of usurious moneylenders, and in consequence of their illiteracy, and the dual character of their oppression, are incapable of taking the steps towards their emancipation from these evils; and

Whereas the industrial working class, subjected to intense exploitation, in the absence of adequate protective legislation, and the lack of means to enforce that which exists, has failed to organise effectively its own struggle, against these conditions, and has allowed its trade-union movement to fall largely under the leadership of middle-class elements which exploit it for their own communal, political or personal ends; and

Whereas the overwhelming majority of the population, consisting of classes whose interests, though not identical, are not fundamentally opposed, is economically exploited and denied 'educational and social advancement both by the Indian capitalists and foreign government and held in political subjection by the said government with indirect and unconscious help of Indian capitalist class; and

Whereas the exploitation and subjection of the workers and peasants cannot finally cease until economic and

political power have been taken from the present rulers and transferred to the workers and peasants.

It is hereby resolved that:

(1) A political party of workers and peasants be established to voice the demands of these classes within the National Congress, to promote the organisation of trade unions, to wrest them from their present alien control, to advance the organisation of peasants on the basis of their economic and social requirements, and to present a determined and pertinent opposition to the government and thus secure the social, economic and political emancipation of these classes.

(2) Since an essential condition for the fulfilment of this program is the attainment of complete national independence, the party will cooperate for that end with other organisations which profess to desire it and are willing to struggle for its realisation.

(3) It shall therefore be the ultimate object of the party to obtain swaraj wherein the means of production, distribution and exchange are publicly owned and socially controlled.

#### PARTY'S DEMANDS

##### (a) *Immediate Political Demands*

- (1) Universal adult suffrage and responsible government.
- (2) Abolition of communalism.
- (3) Freedom of speech, press and the right of association.
- (4) Removal of all restriction on trade unions.

##### (b) *Economic Demands*

(1) The abolition of indirect taxation and the introduction of graded income-tax on all income exceeding Rs 250 per mensem.

(2) Nationalisation of land wherein all cultivable land will be leased by government direct to the cultivator.

- (3) Nationalisation of means of production, distribution and exchange.
- (4) Rent on landholdings not to be excessive.
- (5) Establishment by the government of state-aided cooperative banks, controlled by local organisation for the provision of credit to peasants at interest not exceeding 7 per cent.
- (6) Establishment by law of the 8-hour day and 6-day week for industrial workers.
- (7) Establishment by law of minimum living wage.
- (8) Establishment of schemes of insurance for sickness, unemployment, old-age pension and maternity benefits.
- (9) Improvement of laws regarding workmen's compensation and employer's liability.
- (10) Legal enactments providing for installation of modern safety appliances in factories, mines etc.
- (11) Weekly payment of wages.

### *(c) Social Demands*

- (1) Complete elimination of illiteracy and the provision of adequate facilities for free and compulsory, liberal and vocational education for all up to the age of 18.
- (2) Establishment of hospitals, health centres, free medical treatment and maternity benefits.
- (3) Training and education in the principles of hygiene and sanitation.
- (4) Provision of adequate housing for workers and peasantry at rents within their means.
- (5) Legal prohibition of all employment of women in dangerous occupation.
- (6) Legal prevention of employment below the age of 18.

### OFFICE-BEARERS

President: Dhundiraj Thengdi; Secretary: S. S. Mirajkar; Executive Committee: S. H. Jhabvala, S. V. Ghate, Lalji Pende (Congress), K. N. Joglekar (trade union), R. S. Nimbkar (education), J. B. Patel (peasants).

### 13. WPP PROGRAM FOR AICC

The present congress activity and program are completely divorced from the everyday life of the masses, and in consequence the bulk of the population, the disenfranchised 98 per cent, have lost all interest in and sympathy for the congress, which has become a feeble body. The present leadership of the congress has tied itself and the congress machinery to a program of work which is of benefit only to an insignificant section of the people, the big capitalists and their allies, the intellectual and professional upper classes. As a consequence, on the one hand, congress circles are divided by personal ends, and on the other, the masses are allowed and even encouraged to express their indignation against their hard lot in the form of communal fights.

In the interest of the vast majority of the people it is urgently necessary to free the congress from the narrow shackles of class interests, and to yoke it to the task of attaining national freedom from the imperialist bondage, as a step towards complete emancipation of the masses from exploitation and oppression.

This meeting of the All India congress committee therefore resolves that:

(1) The aim of the Indian National Congress is the attainment of complete national independence from imperialism and the establishment of a swaraj based upon universal adult suffrage.

(2) It reiterates its faith in civil disobedience, i.e. direct action, as the only effective weapon that will ultimately free the people of India from their subject position but realises that a great general awakening will have to be brought about before this weapon of direct action can be effectively used.

All efforts must be directed to the attainment with the least possible delay of the general awakening, and for this purpose the congress adopts the following program:

(i) 70 per cent of the population which is engaged in agriculture is to be organised into peasants' societies, by district, taluka and village, on the lines of village pan-

chayats, based on universal suffrage, aiming to secure control of the economic life of the rural areas.

(ii) Agricultural cooperative banks to be established by the state for the provision of cheap credit for the peasants, whereby they will be enabled to free themselves from the grip of the saukars, and to purchase modern machinery and other equipment.

(iii) Limitation by law of the rate of interest on loans to 7 per cent per annum

(iv) Limitation of rent to 10 per cent of the total produce, to be paid direct to the state.

(v) Bringing into cultivation by state aid of cultivable land at present unused.

(vi) The industrial working class to be organised into trade unions in order to increase their control over the working conditions. In order to guarantee a human existence, the following legal provisions to be made: (a) eight-hour duty, (b) a minimum living wage, (c) abolition of child labour under the age of 18, (d) a scheme of old-age, health and unemployment insurance for industrial and clerical workers, similar provision being made for agricultural labourers through village organisations, (e) employers' liability and workmen's compensation acts, (f) full freedom for trade-union activity, (g) to make all necessary provisions for adequate housing.

(vii) Free and compulsory education both for boys and girls will be enforced in the primary grades and full facilities will be created for the secondary grades. Provision will also be made to give free technical and vocational training. Special attention will be paid to give instructions in the elementary principles of hygiene, sanitation and civics. Instruction through vernaculars will be necessarily looked at as the most saving element.

(viii) Woman shall enjoy full social, economic and political life on equal status with man.

(ix) All indirect taxation will be abolished so also will feudal rights and dues from the cultivator. Land rent will be fixed to a minimum.

(x) A progressive income tax shall be imposed upon all incomes exceeding Rs 250 per mensem.

(xi) Full freedom of speech, press, and association will be ensured for all.

(xii) Full freedom of religion and faith will be established for all and it shall be absolutely an individual concern

(xiii) While distinctly reiterating the opinion that the reforms and the political machinery created thereunder are unsatisfactory and inadequate, this congress holds that whatever advantage could be secured from existing political machinery must be utilised in the interest of the masses

(xiv) This congress further holds that the abovementioned program of actual work among the masses alone will ultimately emancipate them and therefore all possible efforts have to be made to create all favourable circumstances for the actual working of the same. In the elementary and initial stages of the above work all legal protection and conditions of direct help will have to be created under the existing political machinery and with this definite purpose alone the councils and all other political bodies will be worked and utilised by all congressmen whenever and wherever possible.

(xv) Congressmen will go into the councils, local boards, municipalities, village organisations and occupy all points of vantage and will use them to the fullest extent for the furtherance of the abovementioned program and to bring more and more power in the hands of the people. For this purpose of utmost democratisation of the whole machinery of government, congressmen will make use of and exploit all existing laws and statutes and will further try to introduce new statutes by moving bills, resolutions, amendments, etc., in furtherance of this cause. While thus utilising the existing machinery for the furtherance of the cause of the control of the masses over the same, congressmen will continue the policy of continuous, consistant and uniform obstruction to all government measures whereby the bureaucracy intends to or is likely to strengthen its position. All possible tactics will be used by congressmen to foil government interest, as opposed to above aims, whenever and wherever possible.

(xvi) Whereas some political sanction must be created at the earliest possible date, to effectively compel the government to create favourable conditions and ensure sufficient latitude for the successful operation of the abovementioned program of general awakening and actual building up the *class-conscious mass force* for the final emancipation, means have to be devised to force the government to come to terms for the purposes of granting further immediate political reforms.

Therefore to successfully checkmate the government which is essentially entrenched behind its scientific resources, this congress is of opinion that the railway, posts, telegraphs and all other transport machinery such as steamship, docks, motor services and other means of transport and conveyances must be effectively controlled by building up strong trade unions in these trades and attempts must be made at the point of threat of general strike to bring the government to book to release further political reforms from its unwilling hands. It is therefore resolved to make systematic attempts province by province to effect this organisational work at the direct initiative of each provincial congress committee and under the instructions of the all-India congress committee.

This attempt at a general strike of all transport and conveyances will be strengthened and supplemented by creating a general atmosphere of general strike on other trades as well and for this purpose the congress resolves primarily to yoke itself to the task of trade unionism in all possible spheres.

## 14. WHAT SHOULD THE CONGRESS DO ?

(Excerpt)

Messrs Keshav Nilkanth Joglekar and Raghunath Shivram Nimbkar representatives of the Workers' and Peasants' party have sent the following program for acceptance of the nation through the next meeting of the all-India congress committee.

The political movement that is carried on in the country in the name of the Congress is not in accord with the everyday life of the general public and so distrust has arisen in the mind of the public about the work of the Congress. 98 per cent of the people who have not secured franchise in accordance with the reforms act have become indifferent towards the Congress and so the Congress has grown weak and effete. People who like to pose themselves as leaders have imposed such a program on the Congress that it might be the monopoly of the capitalists and their friends and tools—a handful of educated classes of the higher castes. As a natural result of this short-sightedness a rivalry has arisen among the leaders for selfinterest and these leaders are making their followers disposed to break each other's heads by inciting them on the score of religion or caste distinctions. In order therefore to free the general public from this evil and to relieve them from bondage it is necessary to bring the Congress out of the selfish mire of this handful of people and to set them on such a path as would enable the general public to come permanently out of the clutches of capitalism. This congress therefore resolves that: (Here follows the program given in Document 13).

*Kranti*

14 May 1927

Meerut Record

P 1375—T

Off. Tr. S. Ezekiel

### 15. MCHARRUM MANIFESTO OF THE WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' PARTY OF BOMBAY

Comrades, as the festival of moharrum is being celebrated at present, the Workers' and Peasants' Party of Bombay deems that it is the party's duty to call on the Indian masses to maintain absolutely peaceful and fraternal relations with the another during the festival and not to react to the mischievous propaganda of communal fanatics and start cutting one another's throats. During the last three years, religious riots involving plenty of bloodshed, the sufferers being almost exclusively the down-trodden and exploited sections of the hindu and muslim communities, have broken out in various parts of the country. The poison-propaganda of communal organisations which are spreading all over the country with dangerous rapidity, the fanatical appeals to the religious and communal passions of the hindu and muslim masses by their well-fed bourgeois and religious leaders their attempts to set the hindu masses against the muslim masses and vice versa for their individual or class interests, have disintegrated the national mass movement for swaraj. It has also prevented a rapid unification of the hindu and muslim masses and their organisation into a united formidable force to achieve freedom. The working masses of India, betrayed by their reactionary and reformist leaders, have played into the hands of the fanatical priests and reformist bourgeois political leaders fighting for a division of lucrative jobs or seats in the legislatures.

The working masses of both the hindu and muslim communities have nothing to gain by the communal movement which only splits them on religious lines to the advantage of the exploiting classes. The fundamental political and economic interests of the toiling masses demand that they should refuse to be drawn into the communal movement which is only a conspiracy to prevent the union of the hindu and the muslim masses against the exploiters, to set one group of slaves against the other group in the interests of the exploiters, capitalists,

landlords and religiously-inclined wealthy intellectuals. If riots break out and blood is spilt, the sufferers almost exclusively are the poor and middle classes of both the communities. Comrades! It is shameful and tragic that the hindu masses and the muslim masses who are exploited in common should fight amongst themselves.

The first condition for the success of the struggle for freedom of the Indian masses from their existing miserable political and economic state is that the starving millions of India should realise their fundamental common interests and having realised that, they should organise themselves and launch a united mass struggle for freedom. The masses and the lower middle classes of both hindu and muslim communities should feel that they constitute one single homogeneous body united by a bond of economic serfdom and social and political exploitation. As such, their real interests dictate that they should unite and fraternise with one another against the common exploiter, rather than respond to the sinister propaganda of well-fed hindu and muslim priests and politicians and batter one another's head. Slaves of all communities and of all lands should unite together irrespective of differences of race, religion and latitude till the international army of all oppressed overthrows all exploitation and slavery.

Comrades, the Workers' and Peasants' Party is the political vanguard of all exploited elements of the Indian people, hindu, muslim, parsee and christian. As such the party considers its duty to advise the Indian masses not to participate in religious struggles and communal movements which the religious-minded and ambitious-bourgeois politicians of India—dreamers of pan-hindu or pan-muslim swaraj—aspire to kindle on a countrywide scale. The communal movement will only create a disastrous division in the ranks of the masses, splitting the masses on unreal communal lines, thereby weakening and making impossible a really powerful and effective mass struggle for freedom. The best reply which the hindu and muslim masses can give to the diabolical designs of communal fanatics and scheming politicians to set them against

one another, is to unite themselves with greater zeal and speed and proclaim to the world both vocally and in concrete practical action, "Neither differences of religion nor of race, caste or creed, can divide us, we who form the one homogeneous mass of oppressed and exploited. United as one huge army of militants, we will struggle forward till victory is won."

Meerut Record  
P 702

## 16. THE NEW PARTY

MUZAFFAR AHMAD

When an old party is guided according to the interests of a particular class in the country, it becomes essential to organise a new party to secure social, economic and political freedom. The independents, liberals and other parties in carrying on their work are keeping on friendly terms in all ways with British imperialism. All these parties have been organised only to uphold the interests of the higher classes of society. The Indian National Congress under the leadership of the Gandhi once did indeed come into touch with the masses, but again under the same leadership it has gone far away from them.

Since the last war world conditions have considerably changed. Signs of a mass awakening are apparent all over the world, as a result of the Russian revolutions. British imperialism no longer has the might it had before the war. British imperialism will never be able further to exploit this country without entering into a conspiracy with Indian capitalists and merchants. Hence the cotton excise duty has been abolished, duties have been imposed on import-

ed iron goods and many other changes have been made. As a result of this compromise by British imperialism, there is no hope at all any more of securing any help from the indigenous capitalists and merchants in the struggle for national freedom. From the platform of the National Congress, a succession of presidents have proclaimed that they are not at all prepared to cut off connection with British imperialism. They simply want further to increase their political rights. India cannot have equal rights with the colonies, because India is not certainly a colony of Great Britain, indeed is not the colony of any other European free state. Even by getting dominion status, India's condition cannot improve a bit. For even in that condition India will not be able to avoid being robbed. Australia is still being exploited by imperialism. There can be no madness equal to admitting that a country has secured emancipation, even though imperialism continues. The last stage of capitalism is imperialism. Capitalists first begin exploiting the workers and producers of their own country. When thus their business expands considerably, and there is a dearth of raw produce in their own country, they have to start a search for new markets—their aim being to collect raw materials and sell manufactured goods. The exploitation by capitalists which thus ensues is called imperialism. It is for this reason that imperialists have brought country after country under absolute control, economically and politically.

India lies prone at the feet of British imperialism, so to speak British imperialism, having won over the indigenous capitalists and merchants, is ruthlessly exploiting the masses of the country. To avoid this exploitation, we shall first require complete national independence. But the Indian National Congress does not want that. Congress is by no means ready to sever connection with imperialism. The reason therefore is that most of those who are at the head of Congress belong to the class with which British imperialism has entered into a compromise. Those who know the proceeding of the last Gauhati congress

will certainly have realised that the present Congress is not for the Indian masses.

A proposal was made before the subjects committee of congress that it was to side with peasants and workers when a conflict arose between them and zamindars and capitalists. Pandit Motilal Nehru, the present head of Congress, said in reply thereto that Congress is not the socialist or communist party. The object in making this statement is that Congress is by no means ready to stand up for those who produce all things by their labour. All with eyes to see have all this time noticed that it is not ready. Nevertheless J. M. Sengupta, the leader of the Bengal swarajists, has said the same thing in clearer language. He has said that the party includes many zamindars and that without the help of zamindars, so many men of their party would certainly never be able to enter the councils. So they could by no means help the peasants, going against those zamindars. A Bengali college professor was also in this committee. He expressed his indignation, saying that in that case, Congress would pass into the hands of a particular class, i.e. counting the peasants and workers together, into the hands of 98 per cent of the population. This he could never allow. In his opinion, Congress was to be the organisation collectively of zamindars, capitalists, peasants, workers and the lower middle class. But really can it be that? Not even a lunatic will ever believe that the interests of peasants and zamindars, of capitalists and workers are identical. The interests of peasants and workers mean causes of destruction for zamindars and capitalists. One belongs to the class of the exploited, the other to that of the exploiters. These two classes can never work together consciously. A conflict is inevitable between those who though they work and produce, cannot get food and those who, without working and producing, still have enough to eat and lay by. The big Congress leaders have so far been saying that there is no such struggle in India, and that it is imported from Europe, and thereby managing things by means of bluff and make-believe. But how long can

things go on thus ? Hence, when in response to the call of the age, the demand was made that Congress must stand for the masses its leaders had perforce to admit that they were not of the party of the masses—that they belonged to their own party—i.e. the party of capitalists, merchants and zamindars.

So much for the Indian National Congress. Then again the condition of the All India Trade Union Congress is yet more lamentable. The workmen's unions affiliated to it, instead of being run by workers are being run by middle-class men. These men mostly have fastened themselves on the workmen like evil spirits, to subserve their own interests. Many of them like to mix more with the proprietors of factories than with the workmen. They like more to break a strike than to bring about one for the redress of the wants and grievances of the workers. When they mix with the workers they can never be one of them. They remember that they are superior, of an aristocratic class and merely seek to benefit the worker out of pity. Of the better men among these, some are philanthropists, and believe in peace. Very few have any idea of revolution—possibly they have not even that.

In brief a real worker's movement has not so far begun in this country. Because there is no conception of a radical change, the present workers' movement is not doing the workers much good. Those who try to work for them cannot be one of them, and because they do not know much of presentday revolutionary trade unions, they have not been able so far to build up labour-leaders from among the labourers. Until that is done our workers' movement will never assume shape so to speak.

Because they are the worst exploited, because they are resourceless, and most of all, because, thanks to the factory system, they can very easily organise, it is our workers who can take the lead in the struggle for our national freedom. If they who are to lead, lag behind, there is no doubt that our struggle for emancipation will prove useless trouble.

For these reasons it has become very necessary to form a new party. This party is the party of the masses. We have called it the Peasants' and Workers' Party.

It will include not merely the proletariat, who, thanks to exploitation, have lost all their property and have been forced to sell their labour to capitalists, but also peasants and the lower middle class who have joined the national movement are largely dissatisfied with the autocracy of the capitalists. But no political movement can be carried on merely with the lower middle class—hence many of them incline to a policy of revolutionary terrorism. But the thoughtful among them have come to realise that this is not the path of true revolution—and many of them now are attracted towards the masses.

This new party of ours is composed of peasants, workers, and the lower middle class. The proletarian workers will take the lead in this national struggle of India and the peasants with their immense manpower will join them. Because the peasants and workers, who constitute the sole and immense strength of our national struggle, are illiterate and ignorant, the lower middle class will impart education and knowledge to them.

*Ganavani*, 14 April 1927

Meerut Record, P 576

Tr. K. B. Roy

## V. Seventh Session of AITUC and BNR Strike

### 17. AITUC DELHI SESSION, 1927

PHILIP SPRATT

The 7th session of the All-India TUC was held on 12 and 13 March in the hall of the Hindu College, Delhi. The EC had previously decided that the session should be held at Calcutta, during April, but owing to the desire that Saklatvala should be present, and for the convenience of the MLAs, the time and place were altered. Because of this, and because there is no local TU movement at Delhi, the attendance was small. There was no reception committee, which usually acts as a credentials committee and accordingly there is no record of the number of delegates or of those represented. The actual number of delegates was 45-50, and included Shiva Rao and Kirk from Madras, Sethi, Giri, P. Bose, S. Bose, A. Ghosh, Aftab Ali, Muzaffar Ahmad from Bengal, Jhabvala, Thengdi, Joglekar, Nimbkar, Mirajkar, Ghate from Bombay, Chamanlal and S. D. Hassan from Punjab, and Joshi and Rai Saheb Chandrika Prasad. Visitors included Goswami, Lala Lajpat Rai, Srinivasa Iyengar and Rangaswami Iyengar.

Only one full session was held when the chairman's address was read. The rest was in theory all EC meeting, in which about 25 of the delegates could take part, but a special motion was passed allowing all delegates to take part in discussion, but not to vote. Actually, they did vote.

The rules in regard to resolutions were evaded, and anybody brought forward any number of resolutions. Further the rule of the chairman Prasad, who is a benevolent old-man, was extremely weak, and very frequently the proceedings had to be almost forcibly quietened. Nevertheless it must not be supposed that the proceedings were entirely farcical. Quite important results were achieved.

The two wings were present in nearly equal strength, and the "left" was able to effect favourable compromises on a number of points, though it could not without right. The "left" derives mainly from Bombay and Punjab. The Bengal "left", owing to the circumstances related above, and to other quarrels, decided to boycott the session, which it did, with the exception of Aftab Ali. This young man left the meeting almost in tears on the last day, threatening loudly to found a new congress. This threat was also repeated from Punjab. I do not think that either is serious as such, but it indicates a view which seems to be fairly widespread, that the congress is simply a bogus affair which it is not worth joining. The elements which favour splitting or founding a new body include good "left" individuals and policemen in about equal proportions, so that any section on their part would be most unfortunate and difficult to deal with.

The proceedings opened on the first day with a great quarrel between the rest of the Bengal delegation and Aftab Ali over his credentials, and most of the other points in the notorious Bengal quarrel. Each claims that the others' unions are bogus, and since the unions of the majority are older their claims were upheld in this case. Campbell had told me that he attempted to investigate one of the very cases at issue, the seamen's unions, and was unable to decide definitely, though he was inclined to think that the old union, of which Daud is secretary, was less vigorous than the new one of Aftab Ali.

After this and the other new affiliations had been got rid of, the long list of resolutions was taken. I am unable

yet to give the texts except in a few cases, but I can supply the substance.

Proposed by Joshi that the recent settlement of the South African question renders the proposed trade-union conference on the subject unnecessary.

Joshi: protest against the absence of action on the part of the government in response to the scheme of labour representation put forward at the last congress.

Joshi: general labour demands. 8-hour day, sickness and accident insurance etc. Amendments added weekly payment of wages and prohibition (!).

Demand for legislation on the question of fines and dismissals.

Demand for scheme of unemployment benefit.

Demand for a pension scheme for menial employees of the government.

Resolution condemning the common evasion of factory inspection, and demanding the appointment of more women factory inspectors.

Resolution welcoming the proposed legislation on the shift system, and demanding a statutory 8-hour limit to shifts.

These are what may be called the official resolutions and were put forward mainly by Joshi himself. They were all carried without discussion and practically without amendment.

Chamanlal who made an appearance at the congress for the first time for three years or so, proposed a resolution congratulating Saklatvala. This was accepted of course, though the Bombay group had drafted a resolution congratulating Battersea and the Holborn LP on their choice of candidates. This was not passed, as the group was still timid. Chamanlal then brought forward a protest against the dispatch of Indian troops to China, which was carried and Thengdi then proposed a more general resolution on China. It read:

This congress puts on record its wholehearted approval of the magnificent advance made by the people of China

towards the attainment of national freedom and in pursuit of the principle of selfdetermination. The congress warmly appreciates the valuable work that has been done by the trade unions and peasant organisations, which, under the leadership of the Kuomintang have frustrated the aggressive designs of the united imperialist powers. Finally the congress while pledging its full support to the movement of liberation in China, records its firm conviction that the cause of Indian nationalism and the struggle of the lower classes against exploitation can profit from the heroic example set by the Chinese working class

This caused a great discussion. Joshi, Shiva Rao and so on objected to the last part on the ground that it committed the congress to a policy of violence.

Eventually the sentence was modified in a way which I cannot recollect, but it was left I think essentially unaltered

That finished the business for that day, as the rest was spent in the open session, when the chairman's address was read, and everyone slept. At the end the secretary's report was read. It contained little of interest. The number of affiliated unions is now 57, an increase of 5 during the year. The excuse given for the lack of any activity was the continual dispute between the two secretaries in Calcutta. The financial statement showed a very small expenditure and a balance of a few hundred rupees

On the following day a row arose immediately on a motion by Shiva Rao to accept the secretary's report and statement of accounts, and to add an expression of gratitude to the secretary and of confidence in him. The exact wording I forget Jhabvala moved to omit the word 'confidence'.

An effort was made to get over the difficulty by confining it to mere acceptance of the report, but Jhabvala was adamant. After an exhibition of personalities the original resolution was carried.

Thengdi next moved a resolution on international trade-union unity:

This congress deplores its lack of effective organised connection with the world trade-union movement, and at the same time the absence of a single all-inclusive international of trade unions. It views with approval the efforts which have been made by the Anglo-Russian unity committee, the national trade-union organisations of Norway, Mexico, Japan etc., and the large number of local unity committees in Europe and elsewhere to bring about unity between the International Federation of Trade Unions and the Red International of Labour Unions. It pledges itself to support such efforts in the future and to affiliate to an international which shall unite these two organisations and strive to embrace the whole trade-union forces of the world.

Again there was a fierce discussion. Joshi moved to omit lines 5 and 6 of the above, and to modify the last sentence into expression of hope instead of that of a pledge. His amendment was carried. It leaves the attitude expressed as before, but the policy implied is reduced to quiescence.

It was now the turn of the sectional interests, and resolutions were rapidly passed supporting demands on behalf of railwaymen, miners (abolition of underground employment of women, with a protest against the lack of action after an official inquiry and Sunday working in collieries), Jute workers, telegraph persons, and cordite factory workers. A protest was raised against the practice of voicing particular demands in a general labour conference.

A resolution was then moved confirming the action taken at a previous EC meeting when the Workers' Welfare League was adopted as the official representative in Britain. The Bombay group had a better resolution on the point, but in view of this it was not brought forward. It was carried.

Next Chamanlal moved:

This congress looks upon imperialism as a form of capitalist class government intended to facilitate and perpetuate the exploitation of all workers, both white and

coloured, in the interest of the small ruling class, and declares that the only safeguard against exploitation lies in the creation by the working classes of a corresponding measure of unity and solidarity. Congress therefore expresses its willingness and desire to bring about the greatest possible solidarity and coordinated activity on the part of the trade unions throughout the British empire in order to counteract the ruthless exploitation carried on under the aegis of British imperialism (this is very close to the text at any rate. I have only a first draft here at the moment).

This was carried by 24-3.

Thengdi then moved:

This congress deplores the tendency in the trade-union movement towards the creation and maintenance of small and overlapping unions, with its results in inter-union rivalry, unnecessary dissipation of energy, and the reduction of the strength of the workers in negotiation with the employers. Congress therefore declares in favour of the development of the trade unions on industrial lines, in the direction of one union for each industry, and hereby resolves to appoint a thoroughly representative committee which shall formulate detailed plans whereby the existing local and sectional unions shall have power to coopt accredited representatives of unions not affiliated to the congress.

Giri, of the BN Union, moved to add the words 'or federation of unions' and this was accepted by the mover. The sting having been taken out of it, it was accepted unanimously.

A resolution was then moved as follows, and accepted unanimously, without amendment.

This session of the AITUC deplores the fact that the industrial working class, despite its immense importance, has not yet found expression for its political aspirations through the medium of an independent workingclass political party. Similarly congress notes that the plight of the

peasantry who form the basis of Indian society, is exploited by other political creeds and organisations, while their material conditions remain unaltered. Congress therefore declares that the paramount need of the working classes, industrial and agricultural, is the establishment of a workers and peasants' party that shall fight insistently against the exploitation of those classes, strive to secure for them full rights of citizenship, political, social and educational, and achieve the complete liberation of India from all alien domination. Finally this session of the congress pledges itself to work for the creation of such a party on an all-India basis

There followed some minor amendments to the constitution, framed by the Bengal 'right', making it incumbent upon all affiliated unions to join the provincial committee of the TUC. The more comprehensive set of amendments framed by Bombay could not be discussed owing to lack of time

Saklatvala then addressed the session. His proposals were chiefly the following: (1) Closer contact between the TU movement and the National Congress, to be brought about by local affiliation etc. (he discussed the same suggestion a few days later with an informal meeting of the working committee of the congress). (2) Organising work to be taken up by the congress itself by the appointment of provincial committees, (3) Taking the international affairs of the congress out of the hands of the general secretary by the appointment of a 'national and international negotiations committee', which shall have advisory powers only. This committee will also maintain contact with the National Congress. His suggestions were adopted by the congress, which elected its officers for the following year in accordance. The caucuses had been busy, and the following list was put forward and accepted unanimously.

Chairman: Chamanlal

Vice-chairman: Kirk and Bose (which?)

General secretary: Joshi

Administrative secretary: Thengdi

Assistant secretaries : R. R. Bakhale and S. V. Ghate

Negotiations committee chairman, two secretaries:

B. F. Bharucha (a congressman, with no labour connections, who was present) Goswami, J. Nehru (of the Brussels conference), K. N. Joglekar, and Lala Lajpat Rai. provincial organisers. Jhabvala for Bombay, Santosh Kumari Gupta, as national women's organiser. The others I could not note down

Treasurer: Ginwala.

It was decided to hold the next session at Kanpur in November next. The name was changed, no reason being given by the mover, to "Trades Union Congress" By that time the house was tired and would accept anything. The proceedings finished with further congratulations to Joshi, Saklatvala and Battersea.

I should add that shortly before the end Aftab Ali proposed a resolution that in future no recommendations be made to the government of representatives of labour at the Geneva conferences of the ILO. It was very badly worded, and as he read it out the laughter was loud. Nevertheless it was lost by a very small vote (14-12, I think). He rightly perceived in Geneva a bait which draws all sorts of undesirables into the trade-union movement here, and what is worse, attracts those who are already in.

Further, as Saklatvala was putting forward a very comprehensive scheme for the foundation of a labour college, a labour publication office, and a research body all in one, I said nothing in the open congress on this question. In private discussions, however, it was agreed that whatever the fate of this scheme as a whole, I should if possible begin work even on a small scale. Much greater eagerness was displayed than before.

## 18. ALL-INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS (7TH SESSION) RESOLUTIONS

The following resolutions were passed by the 7th session of the All-India Trade Union Congress, held at Delhi on 12 and 13 March 1927 :

### REPORT AND THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

1. This congress adopts the statement of accounts and the annual report for the year 1926 as submitted by the general secretary and takes the opportunity of expressing its sense of confidence in him and deep appreciation of the valuable services he has rendered to the cause of Indian labour.

### GREETINGS TO MR SAKLATVALA MP

2. This Congress extends its cordial welcome and the greetings of Indian workers to Mr Shapurji Saklatvala, MP, and takes this opportunity of thanking him publicly for his valiant fight in the cause of millions of Indian workers and peasants and thanks the electors of North Battersea for returning him to parliament, for the purpose of carrying on a united fight for British and Indian workers

### CHINA

3. (a) This congress puts on record its wholehearted approval of the magnificent advance made by the people of China towards selfdetermination. Congress warmly appreciates the valuable work that has been done by the trade union and peasants' organisations, which under the leadership of Kuomintang have frustrated the aggressive designs of the united imperialistic powers. Congress while pledging its full support to the movement of liberation in China, expresses its firm conviction that the

cause of Indian nationalism and the struggle of the working classes against exploitation should profit from the example of solidarity of the nationalist movement and the workers' and peasants' organisations as set by China

(b) This congress vehemently protests against the action of the Indian government in furthering the aims of imperialism by sending Indian troops to China and calls upon the government of India to recall all such troops

#### INTERNATIONAL UNITY

4 This congress views with approval the efforts which have been made by the Anglo-Russian unity committee to bring about unity between the International Federation of Trade Unions and Red International of Labour Unions and expresses a hope that the international unity will soon be achieved and regrets its inability to consider joining the international movement till such unity is achieved

#### RESOLUTION AGAINST IMPERIALISM

5. (a) This congress looks upon imperialism as a form of capitalist class government intended to facilitate and perpetuate the exploitation of all workers, both white and coloured, in the interests of the small ruling class, and declares that the only safeguard against exploitation lies in the creation by the working class of a corresponding measure of unity and solidarity.

(b) Congress therefore expresses its willingness and desire to bring about the greatest possible solidarity and coordinated activity on the part of the trade unions throughout the British empire, in order to counteract the ruthless exploitation carried on under the aegis of British imperialism

#### SOUTH AFRICA

6 This congress sincerely thanks the Trade Union Congress of South Africa for giving a hearing to Mr C. F.

Andrews who was requested to place before it the grievances of Indian workers in South Africa and also thanks the Trade Union Congress of South Africa for agreeing to have a conference with the representatives of the All-India Trade Union Congress, but is of opinion that as a result of the settlement arrived at by the round-table conference arranged by the governments of the two countries, such conference is not now necessary. However this congress hopes that the South Africa Trade Union Congress and Labour Party will support and initiate measures for the organisation and uplift of the Indian workers in South Africa and instructs the general secretary to remain in communication with authorities of the labour organisations in South Africa.

#### LABOUR REPRESENTATION IN LEGISLATURE

7. This congress protests against the failure of the government of India to give effect to the scheme placed before them last year by the All-India Trade Union Congress for labour representation in the central and provincial legislatures though the demand was modest, tentative and far short of the real requirements of the workers in the country.

#### GENERAL LABOUR DEMANDS

8. This congress is of opinion that legislation shall immediately be passed providing for all workers working in factories, mines, tea, coffee and rubber plantations and in all other organised trades and industries (1) adult franchise, (2) an eight-hour day, (3) machinery for fixing minimum wages, (4) sickness and unemployment insurance, (5) old-age pensions and pensions for widows and orphans, (6) maternity benefits, (7) weekly payment of wages.

#### FINES

9. This congress reaffirms its old resolutions—protest-

ing against the system of fines prevailing in industrial and commercial firms and railways and request the government of India to pass legislations making illegal all agreements between the employees and the employed enabling the employers to make deductions on account of fines from the wages or salaries of the employed.

#### PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT BUREAUS

10. Realising that every adult worker has a right to work and in view of the fact that there is at present widespread unemployment in the country, this congress urges upon the government of India to take as the first step to establish immediately public free employment bureaus in all industrial and commercial towns.

#### MENIALS IN GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT

11. This congress is of opinion that the workers styled and ranked as menials, employed by government, municipalities and other local bodies and by railways, should be given the same privileges as are enjoyed by the ministerial staff with regard to leave, pension, provident fund, gratuity, etc.

#### WOMEN INSPECTORS

12. This congress is strongly of opinion that more qualified Indian women should be employed in the staff for factory inspection in all the provinces of the country.

#### RAILWAY MEN'S GRIEVANCES

13. (a) This congress expresses its deep regret at the unwillingness of the government of India to carry out the resolution passed by the legislative assembly without division on 5 February 1925 for an inquiry into the griev-

ances of the railway subordinate employees, at the attitude adopted by the honourable member for commerce and railways towards appeals preferred by aggrieved railway employees, ignoring the fundamental rules and principles laid down for the protection of public servants against unjust treatment by officials of government or agency companies working state railways on behalf of the government of India, urges the legislative assembly to insist upon the enquiry being made publicly.

(b) This congress reaffirms resolution No 23 of the trade-union congress of 1925 and urges upon the government of India to amend the Indian railway act by inserting provisions for the constitution in India of a central wages board for setting disputes concerning wages and conditions of service and for making it obligatory on railway administrations to establish joint industrial councils on the lines of the English railways act of 1921, part iv, with modifications to suit Indian conditions

14. (a) This congress reaffirms resolution No 4 of the first all-India railwaymen's conference that the daily rate system be substituted by a monthly rate system of pay in the railway workshops with all the privileges of the regular staff and all railwaymen to work 208 hours which should constitute a month except for clerical staff whose total number of working hours should be only 144, gazetted holidays being reckoned as working hours in the month in which they fall

(b) This congress is further of opinion that the work done over and above this should be paid at  $1\frac{1}{2}$  (one and a half) times between six and eighteen hours, at double the rates of pay drawn by men between sunset and sunrise and gazetted holidays

15. This congress regrets to state that notwithstanding the declarations made by the government of India from time to time regarding the removal of racial discrimination, differentiations are still being practically made in matters of appointments, pay, leave, housing, etc., and Indians are not appointed generally to certain higher posts even in the subordinate grades, and this congress, therefore, urges upon the government of India to direct all the

railway administrations to remove in actual practice all discriminations which have been abolished in theory.

16. This congress urges the government of India to insist upon the companies working the state railways to follow the state railway rules and practices relating to matters concerning the railway servants. Any failure on the part of the said companies to observe the said conditions should be regarded as mismanagement of the state property and should be forthwith determined.

This congress observes that the government of India possess ample powers over the working of such companies, as the government director sitting on the boards of the directors of the companies has the power of veto in all proceedings of the board, besides the general supervision and control exercised by the government on the companies.

17. The congress requests the railway board to give in the annual administration report, the same statistics relating to railway servants in receipt of salaries between Rs 100 and Rs 249 per mensem, as are given for the servants in receipt of salaries of Rs 250 per mensem and over.

18. This congress strongly condemns the practice of Indian railways employing contractors who levy a fee from porters licensed to handle passengers' luggage at stations and recommends direct enlistment and control of such porters by the railway administration without levying any fee from the porters as such fees inflicted hardships upon the porters and the public

19. This congress urges upon the agent of the East Indian Railway to publish the report of the railway officer deputed by Mr Legge, the late agent of the East Indian Railway, to investigate the grievances of licensed porters' at Howrah station and to place it before the East Indian Railway local advisory committee.

#### SEAMEN'S GRIEVANCES

20. This congress while disapproving of the action of the government of India in not enforcing the recommendations of the seamen's recruitment committee by intro-

ducing a bill for amending the Indian merchant shipping act in the legislative assembly, strongly urges upon the government of India to introduce the same in the next session of the Indian legislature without any further delay.

21 This congress strongly urges upon the government of India the necessity of setting up advisory committees along with the establishment of the seamen's recruitment bureau as recommended by the majority of the members of the seamen's recruitment committee on the lines of the Genoa International Labour Conference

22 (a) This congress urges on the government to legislate for eight hours work for seamen employed in inland navigable rivers on the lines recommended by the Genoa International Labour Conference of 1920, in consultation with the organisations of shipowners and seamen

(b) This congress while disapproving of the action of the AON and RSN companies of Bengal in compelling their employees engaged on steamers, launches etc, to work for 12 hours per day and 16 hours when the steamers are on stop strongly urges upon them, the necessity of introducing at an early date the system of 8 hours work per day or in the alternative to pay extra wages for overtime work

23 This congress urges upon the ICN and RSN companies (a) to grant holidays allowable under the negotiable instruments act to their employees engaged on steamers launches etc like the railway employees and (b) to make proper accommodation for their employees in steamers

#### JUTE INDUSTRY

24 This congress urges upon the Indian Jute Mills Associations or the municipal boards in the areas to acquire the bustees in the jute mill area, described by Mr Thomas, MP as "Vile, filthy, disease-ridden hovels and foul heaps of pestilence" and build sanitary dwellings for housing jute mill labour.

25 The Trade Union Congress urges on the owners of jute mills to revise the scandalously low wages averaging

Rs 15 per month paid to the workers of jute industry which has been paying an average dividend of ninety per cent for the last ten years.

#### MINING

26. This congress deplores the practice of the employment of women underground and requests the government to prohibit it immediately.

27. This congress urges that Sundays be observed as full holidays and rules for granting leave on full pay be made for all mines in India.

#### SHIFT IN MINES

28. This congress welcomes the legislation introduced by the government of India in the legislative assembly introducing shift system in Indian mines, but is of opinion that no shift of a period longer than eight hours shall be permitted

#### TELEGRAPH PEONS

29. This congress calls upon the government to give immediate effect to the demands of telegraph peons as made at the last annual meeting of the All-India Telegraph Workers' Union.

#### PRESS EMPLOYEES

30. This congress is deliberately of opinion that conditions under which the piece system is worked in all government and other presses are inequitious complex and opposed to the principles of justice and humanity and therefore urges the immediate abolition of the system or bring it into lines with the system prevailing in Britain.

31. The congress deplores the insanitary conditions under which most of the press employees in Calcutta and other large cities have to work and urges upon the government to adopt remedial measures.

32. The congress considers that the salaries of the press

employees all over India are inordinately low and urges upon the employees to grant them a living wage.

33 In view of the universal opposition to the piece system as at present obtains in this country, this congress views with apprehension the steps that are being taken by the authorities of the EIR Press to convert a large number of their salaried workers into piece workers and invites the attention of the honourable member in charge respectively of the railways and of industries and labour with a view to stop the extension of the system which is worked in India on the basis of maximum labour for minimum wages.

#### PROVIDENT FUND

34 This congress while welcoming the recent order of the administrations to accept menials drawing up to Rs 30 per month and over to the provident fund, requests that all menials irrespective of pay be allowed the option of joining the provident Fund

#### WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION

35 This congress is of opinion that the rates of compensation provided under the workers compensation act are inadequate and suggests that the act be immediately amended to bring it into lines with the British legislation.

#### TOTAL PROHIBITION

36 That this congress urges government of India and provincial governments take immediate step to reach the goal of total prohibition at an early date in as much as the liquor traffic has considerably affected the general welfare of the working class in India.

#### ORGANISATION OF TRADE UNIONS

37 This congress deplores the tendency in the trade-union movement towards the creation and maintenance of small and over-lapping unions with its results in inter-union rivalry, unnecessary dissipation of energy, and re-

duction of the strength of the workers in negotiations with the employers.

38. Congress therefore declares in favour of the development of the trade unions on industrial lines in the direction of one national federation for each industry, and hereby resolves to appoint a thoroughly representative committee which shall formulate detailed plans whereby the existing local and sectional unions shall be amalgamated into national industrial organisations. This committee shall have power to co-opt accredited representatives of unions not affiliated to the congress.

#### APPOINTMENT OF THE NEGOTIATION COMMITTEE

39. The congress appoints a negotiations committee—national and international—consisting of the following members: (1) Lala Lajpat Rai, (2) Mr Jawaharlal Nehru, (3) Mr T. C. Goswami, (4) Mr N. M. Joshi, (5) Mr D Chamanlal, (6) Mr D R Thengdi, (7) Mr B F Bharucha, (8) Mr K. N. Joglekar and (9) Raisaheb Chandrika Prasad.

The committee shall not take any action without the sanction of the executive council of the congress.

#### WORKERS' WELFARE LEAGUE OF INDIA

40. This congress appoints the Workers' Welfare League of India as the agent of the All-India Trade Union Congress in Britain for the supply and distribution of information regarding the trade-union congress within the limits of the resolutions of the trade-union congress.

#### CHANGE IN THE CONSTITUTION

41. The congress resolves that the following clauses (d) and (e) be inserted in rule 4:

(d) That applications for affiliation of unions shall be forwarded through the provincial committees to the general secretary, with the decisions arrived at by it that no applications for affiliation shall be withheld by the provincial committee.

(e) That no union shall be affiliated to the congress.

without being first affiliated to the provincial committee. That no union shall be affiliated which has not been in existence at least for one year and has not had its accounts and statement of paying members audited by a qualified auditor or an authorised representative of the All-India Trade Union Congress.

42. Add the following at the end of rule 3: "And such other officers as the Trade Union Congress thinks it necessary to appoint from time to time."

43. In rule no 17, in place of the word provincial secretary: substitute the word, "provincial committee".

44. (a) Rule no 26. For the words, "Representatives of the unions or...branches", substitute the words "Representatives of affiliated unions or branches of affiliated unions".

(b) Omit the last sentence in rule no 26.

#### ELECTION OF OFFICE-BEARERS

This congress resolves that the following be elected as office-bearers for the year 1927:

*President:* Mr Dewan Chamanlal

*Vice-President:* Mr Ernest Kirk

—do— Mr Mrinal Kanti Bose

*General Secretary:* Mr N. M. Joshi

*Administrative Secretary:* Mr D. R. Thengdi

*Assistant Secretaries:* (1) Mr R. R. Bakhale  
(2) Mr S. V. Ghate

*Treasurer:* Mr. F. J. Ginwala

*Auditors:* Messers Gharda Davar & Co.

#### APPOINTMENT OF PROVISIONAL ORGANISERS

46. This congress resolves that the following persons be appointed as provincial organisers:

Bombay Mr S. H. Jhabvala

Madras (1) Mr E. L. Iyer

(2) Mr B. Shiva Rao

Central Provinces Mr R. S. Ruikar

Bengal Mr Kishorilal Ghose

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Punjab	Mr Ram Chandra
Assam	Mr T. R. Pookhan
Sind	Mr Naranji Anandji
Bihar	Mr P. C. Bose
United Provinces	Mr Ramzan Ali
All-India Women's Organiser	Mrs Santosh Kumari Gupta

THE LOCATION OF THE OFFICE OF THE CONGRESS

47 This congress resolves that the office of the All-India Trade Union Congress shall be located in Bombay.

THE NEXT SESSION

48. The congress decides that the next session of the All-India Trade Union Congress should be held at Kanpur in the month of November.

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## VI. Extended Meeting of the Central Executive of the CPI

### 19 EXECUTIVE'S ANNUAL REPORT, 1927

We have the pleasure to submit to you the following report of the work done by us during the year ending 31 May 1927 and before we proceed to discuss other points, it is in our opinion necessary to give you a short history of the Communist Party of India which will go a long way to clear the misunderstanding prevailing in some quarters about us. Our movement, as all of you know, is neither one imported from abroad, nor a group maintained by Russia for its propaganda in India, as the vested interests say, to unpopularise Soviet in this country. Really speaking, it is the development of the social forces that have brought us all together, and have helped the formation of this party. India has been busily struggling for its political emancipation for the last several years. The aftermath of the war had created an all-round discontent and the masses were everywhere seen in a revolutionary mood, which could not find a way for radical action owing to lack of bold leadership. It was at this juncture that Gandhi came forward with his noncooperation movement and the masses joined the struggle with great zeal which made things in India almost on the verge of a great political upheaval until at last the leader gave in at Bardoli to the reactionary influences. Ever since, the noncooperation army went on dwindling owing to difference of opinion while the leadership though, went on unchallenged, was yet left superficial. The leader was arrested and the movement was killed partly by

government repression, and partly by those who had but reluctantly joined it, and who got the opportunity to play their own game. The Swaraj Party stepped in with the slogan of parliamentary obstruction and went on creating dissensions in the congress ranks till at last it captured the Congress finally at Kanpur. Gandhi, who had by this time been released, had to submit to the opposition, thus leaving the field in no better condition than when he started the noncooperation movement. The situation went on changing and quarrels arose within the Swaraj Party itself. Another independent party was formed with little change from the swarajist program.

During all this period of the fight for leadership in the Congress, the younger element, dissatisfied with these wranglings, was busily trying to find its own way. A part of it went to the futile terrorist camp, while others formed small groups here and there such as the Young Men's Association, etc. It was during these days that the name of communism was first heard in India. In the year 1922 a dozen young men who had left India during the hijrat movement and who later migrated to the University of Tashkent, returned through Afghanistan, pregnant with the new political thought and training that they got at Tashkent. Immediately on their entering this country they were arrested and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. S. Usmani and Nalini Bhushan Dasgupta who were still out, took up the task of organising a people's party and began to work amidst the congress and khilafat workers. They too were arrested with two others, M. Ahmad and S. A. Dange on a charge of conspiracy under section 121. This case received a great publicity and created a vague idea of communism and brought into light the program of a national revolution that was proposed by the revolutionary leaders of world reputation for India. Kanpur being the place where the communists were tried and sentenced, the zeal for a party with the program that came in the court, was comparatively more than in other places, and Satyabhakta availed himself of this opportunity and started a party named and styled as the Indian Communist Party. This party attrac-

ted a number of people who got themselves enlisted as its members. Amongst the ideals, the demand for complete independence was kept in the forefront. A good deal of propaganda was made to popularise the name of the party. But it was seen that in spite of all this there was nothing Marxian underlying the work, and on the contrary, a number of things, which it is unnecessary to refer here, were done that would in a country like India where communism is not generally understood, would bring into disrepute, the philosophy of communism. After about two years' existence, this party called a conference of communists in India, at Kanpur, and it was announced as the first communist conference. A few comrades, decided to capture the party, the membership of which was about 200-300. The approximate number of members cannot be given since Satyabhakta has not transferred to us the records he had with him. Nor has he given a statement of accounts of the funds he had collected. Though we succeeded in capturing this organisation the party was kept in a provisional form and neither a definite constitution nor a program could be formulated. The executive appointed four provincial organisers to organise with different people, with an idea of enlisting their opinion on this subject.

The above is a short history of the birth of the Communist Party of India and we proceed further to place before you the work done by the executive.

Immediately after we parted from Kanpur, a meeting was called by Muzaffar Ahmad at Calcutta of all the provincial organisers and other members with the idea of changing the headquarters of the party from Bombay to Delhi, since it was found difficult to go on with it at Bombay, as was decided at Kanpur. At the same time a manifesto on the Hindu-Muslim problem which had become very tense at the time was issued suggesting that only an organisation of the masses based on an economic program would unite the different communities on a common platform. Subsequently the manifesto was proscribed by the Burma and Central Provinces government. About seven hundred rupees were promised out of which 600 were collected.

Later a regular office was started at Delhi with Bager-hatta in charge. He was later joined by Ghate and organisation work was started.

It was then decided to hold a propaganda conference at Delhi in November last. The general secretaries went on a propaganda tour all over the country but the conference could not be held because of an unexpected raid on the office of H A Nasim, the general secretary of the reception committee and we have reasons to believe that our correspondence was interfered with, in spite of the home member's assurance to the contrary that our correspondence, including that with foreign organisations, was legal. All this gave a strong blow to the young party and it took another two or three months to recover from the attack.

By this time the Lahore group decided to hold the general conference in February last and a reception committee was formed. The RC invited Saklatvala to preside over the conference and Muzaffar who had gone to Lahore ran down to Bombay to meet Saklatvala on his arrival. Saklatvala refused this invitation on the grounds that we were not a regular communist party affiliated to the 3rd International and that he had his own responsibilities to the organisation which he represented. The copy of the letter which he published in the press had created an unsympathetic atmosphere towards the party. The conference therefore had to be given up as it was thought desirable to avoid controversy at this stage of the party's development.

Subsequently, we were all called to Delhi by Saklatvala, who had considerably changed his attitude by that time. At Delhi, the whole matter was discussed with Saklatvala, who agreed with us on the necessity of having a communist party in India.

Immediately we met at Delhi where it was decided to call the general meeting on 29 May to adopt a constitution and to elect the executive at Bombay.

#### *Record of Work Done During the Period*

*Bengal:* The members of the party have helped in the formation and growth of the workers' and peasants' par-

ties that were started in various provinces. Special mention can be made of the work done by our comrades in Bengal in rebuilding the already existing Peasants' and Workers' Party in the province and making it a strong organisation. The services done by *Langal* now *Ganavani*, in spite of the poor finances and the wrecked health of Muzaffar will go a long way in promoting the proletarian cause in that province.

*Lahore*: Efforts were repeatedly made here by Darveshi, Majid, Ramchander and Hasan to start a regular organisation of the work on educative lines. They took a conspicuous part in the Trade Union Congress activities and have organised about half a dozen unions successfully. They have also shown good work in the National Congress and we are hopeful of further good results. Recently the weekly *Mehnatkash*, an Urdu weekly, has been started by them, which is doing splendid work in educating the masses of the Urdu-knowing districts.

*Bombay*: Here a strong leftwing organisation was found necessary against the present leadership, and our comrades have been successful in having a W and P organisation, which has already commenced work amongst the industrial workers with their organ *Kranti*. A number of trade unions have been formed, and they could command an influential position in the AITUC recently held at Delhi. With the help of the comrades returned from other provinces, they succeeded in getting Thengdi and Ghate elected as administrative and assistant secretaries respectively, and Joglekar in the negotiations committee. The Bombay group has also been active in the congress organisation, of which Joglekar is a joint secretary. In the AICC they have succeeded in returning Nimbkar and Joglekar, who put up a considerable fight for our program at Gauhati and at the meeting of the AICC held at Bombay.

*Rajputana*: In the province of Rajputana, Bagerhatta, the general secretary, with the help of Pundit Arjunlal Sethi, has been able to have an effective majority in the provincial congress committee. This provincial congress committee has returned 3 members, two republicans, out

of the 7 seats allotted to the all-India congress committee. Trade-union activities could not be started because Bager-hatta had to devote a great part of his time and energies to the all-India organisation of our party. Recently a W and P organisation has been started and efforts are being made to organise industrial labour.

*Madras:* Singaravelu has been doing good propaganda work and has been devoting greater portion of his time to trade-union and strike activities. There is no other organisation excepting the Labour and Kisan Party. In his position as a member of the municipal corporation, Singaravelu has been doing propaganda there

*UP and other Provinces:* Efforts were made to organise work in other provinces, but owing to lack of sufficient financial resources, we have not been able to organise any effective left wing, though desire has been expressed by a few communists in certain provinces. In the United Provinces particularly, Azad Sobhani has been able to create a favourable atmosphere for labour activities and we hope that young men would come forward and take up the work.

### *General Support*

We have not been able to enlist that support which we expected while forming this party. Our handicaps in the way of carrying on propaganda amongst the students and young intelligentsia which could have given us a number of conscious workers for the party and also in the way of approaching all labour and peasants organisations, at this stage, for the purpose of promoting the party's program, were mainly caused by lack of funds. It is very essential that energies are directed towards raising at least that small amount of money which is necessary for enabling our comrades to visit all important industrial centres for the purpose of taking stock of the situation in the different provinces and for coming into direct contact with the proletariat. It will only be then that we can promote the program of the party and give the masses a right understanding about our own party. Efforts were

made to start a central organ of the party and in spite of the little help that we could get from our comrades, it was found difficult to start a party organ without our own press, as no press was prepared to suffer, if it came to that.

#### *Government's Attitude Towards the Party*

Though the rulers have in no way directly come into a collision and nothing can, as yet, be said about their attitude towards us, yet the interference with our correspondence, and proscribing of our Calcutta manifesto and the publications of the Communist Party of Great Britain and recently of the 3rd International with all those of other communist parties, etc., will leave no doubts regarding their efforts to stifle our propaganda. Last year we were given to understand by the government of India that our correspondence was quite legal, but this does not seem to have held good in practice, and we are afraid that many letters meant for us have never reached their destinations.

In the North-West Frontier Province, our comrades were put to many difficulties and mention has to be made of the internment of Shafiq soon after his release from a three year's sentence. G. R. Darveshi is under police surveillance and has to report himself at all the places he visits. The Frontier government has not given any reasons for this highhandedness. Usmani is still in jail and is refused proper treatment in spite of the fact that he is suffering from TB and anaemia.

Before parting with the responsibilities given to us last year, and while making it over to you, we wish a great success to the cause which we have tried to serve to the best of our abilities.

#### **THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA**

1. *Name*—The name of the party is the Communist Party of India.

2. *Membership*—Only those subscribing to the program laid down by the Communist International will be eligible for its membership.

3. *Subscription*—Each member of the party shall pay not less than Rs 12 annually or in four instalments as may be decided by the executive, the default in which will cause a lapse in membership.

4. *Admission Fee*—Will be Re 1 payable on signing the membership form. Every applicant for membership shall be required to get his form countersigned by at least two members of the party executive.

5. *Annual Session*—The Communist Party of India shall hold an annual meeting of all the members which shall be the highest authority to discuss and adopt the report of the retiring executive, congress and trade-union groups and shall, on the basis of the same form a program for the ensuing year Election of the office-bearers and a central executive, discussing of the audited statement of accounts, and other resolutions on the agenda shall be the main business of the annual session

6. *Responsibility for Administration*—The affairs of the party when not in session, shall be regulated and administered by the executive council, which will be elected on the principle of centralisation not territorially; it will be elected from the floor of the entire party membership and which will not act in any manner inconsistent with the resolution of the party.

7. *The party, shall have the following executive offices*—presidium of 5 members, one general secretary, one treasurer. There will be no president of the party and every meeting shall elect its own president during its sittings

8. *The Central Executive*—The central executive of the party shall consist of the 5 members of the presidium, the general secretary and the treasurer and eight other members elected by the party. The executive shall ordinarily meet three times in a year at such time and place as the general secretary in consultation with the presidium may decide

9. *Notice for the Central Executive*—The general secretary will issue the agenda of the central executive mentioning the date time, and place of the meeting not later than 20 clear days before the meeting.

10 When no meeting of the central executive can be called, the general secretary in consultation with the presidium may circulate to the members for opinion such matters as require immediate action and the opinion of the majority of the members shall have the same force as they were passed at the meeting of the central executive.

11. *Presidium*—The party shall elect a presidium for the following purposes: (a) To investigate complaints which may be referred to it by the central executive and to make suggestions for dealing with the same. (b) To investigate complaints of individuals against disciplinary measures taken against them by other party organs and submit their opinion on the same to the central committee for definite action. (c) Supervise and organise small party groups in all other political institutions like the Trade Union Congress and the Indian National Congress. (d) To receive the reports of the group leaders, working in different political bodies and to circulate them among the executive members. (e) To deal with all foreign affairs with the sanction of the executive.

12. The candidates for membership of the presidium must be the party members of the highest possible standing. They must be active workers in the political field for at least five years.

13. *Foreign Bureau*—The presidium with the sanction of the CE will maintain a foreign bureau as an ideological centre, composed of comrades who are not in a position to work inside the country. The foreign bureau will be representative of the CE and will act as the organ through which the international relations of the party will be maintained. But it will not in any way work inconsistent with the party's program and resolutions. The foreign bureau will have a regular office at a place of their convenience and will keep a constant touch with all the CPs and the Comintern and will give publicity to Indian affairs.

14. *Party Discipline*—Strict party discipline is demanded from all members and party organisations. Dis-

cussion on all questions is completely open so long as no decision is taken. When a decision has been taken it must be promptly operated by all members and organs

15. Breach of party discipline calls for action by responsible party organs. Action against party organs includes censure, suspension, or even dissolution of the organisation with re-registering of membership

Against individual membership, action may be censure, dismissal from office or expulsion. In matters of emergency, action can be taken by the presidium and appeal will be allowed before the executive and the party.

16. *Fractions*—In all working classes, political and national organisations, where there are two or more communists, a party fraction must be organised for the purpose of increasing the influence of the party and applying its policy. These fractions will not be independent when formed and will be subordinate to party discipline and program

17. In all bodies like the National Congress executive i.e. the All-India Congress Committee and the executive of the Trade Union Congress, the party will form fractions, which will be placed under the control of the presidium, where the fraction leaders, who will be appointed by the executive committee, will have to submit reports of the work done in the respective bodies. In all such matters where the opinion of the members in the fraction may differ, it will be guided by the presidium until the executive meets.

18. Every question to be decided by the organisation or branch in which the fraction is working, should be discussed beforehand by the fraction meeting and a report of their decision should be sent to the general secretary who will circulate it to the presidium. On every question on which a decision is reached, the fraction members must act unitedly and vote solidly in the meeting of the organisation in question. Failure to do this constitutes a serious breach of party discipline

19. *Minimum Program*—The Communist Party of India at its annual sessions will formulate a regular program

and policy to be worked through the National Congress and the Trade Union Congress and form party groups called the comrades' fractions to work there on behalf of the party. The party will also form minimum programs on the lines of which it will seek cooperation with the existing workers and political parties.

20 The central executive shall have powers to frame laws for the conduct of the communists in other political groups but they will not be inconsistent with those laid down by this constitution

21. *The Central Office*—The place of the central office will be decided by the executive committee where the records of the party will be kept and publications issued.

#### RESOLUTIONS ON THE PARTY : PROGRAM, ELECTIONS, ETC.

The annual session of the Communist Party of India was held in Bombay on Tuesday, 31 May. After the adoption of the executive's annual report and a constitution of the party, the following office-bearers were elected for the ensuing year:

*Presidium:* Muzaffar Ahmad, J. P. Bagerhatta, G. R. Darveshi, K. S. Iyengar, Dange (if willing to sign the party creed)

General secretary : S. V. Ghate

Treasurer S. H. Mistry

*Executive:* M. Singaravelu, Hasrat Mohani, R. S. Nimbkar, M. A. Majid, K. N. Joglekar, S. N. Tagore, A. Halim and S. D. Hasan.

#### *Imperialism Condemned*

The following resolutions were unanimously passed

1 The Communist Party of India looks up to the communist parties of the world, as well as the International, for lead and guidance, in the work undertaken by this party in this country

2 The Communist Party of India desires that a delegation composed of J. P. Bagerhatta, Muzaffar Ahmad, R. S. Nimbkar do travel Great Britain and the conti-

nent to study labour conditions in those countries. The delegation shall submit a report to the party.

3. This party emphatically condemns the imperialist designs on China and sympathises with the Chinese in their struggle for securing economic salvation.

4. This meeting of the Communist Party of India condemns the Anglo-Soviet rupture, brought about by the conservative government, as one of the many attempts of imperialism to drive Russia on the verge of a war.

5. This party considers the present trade-union bill, introduced in Great Britain, as a direct challenge to the rights of labour to unite against capitalists and assures the working classes of Great Britain of its fullest sympathy in their struggle against capitalist aggression.

### *Program*

6. Whereas, in the opinion of the Communist Party of India it is only the dynamic energies of the toiling masses that can bring swaraj to India, and whereas the present bourgeois leadership in the Congress has proved itself to be gradually compromising with imperialism, and as such is directly in opposition to the interests of the masses, this party calls upon all its members to enrol themselves as members of the Indian National Congress, and form a strong left wing in all its organs for the purpose of wresting them from the present alien control

This party further calls upon the communists to co-operate with the radical-nationalists there, to formulate a common program on the lines of the following minimum program laid down by this party

(a) (i) Complete national independence, and the establishment of a democratic republic based on universal adult suffrage. (ii) Abolition of landlordism (iii) Reduction of land rent and indirect taxation, higher incidence of graduated income-tax (iv) Modernisation of agriculture with state aid. (v) Nationalisation of public utilities (vi) Industrialisation of the country with state aid. (vii) 8 hour-day and minimum wage.

(b) For the promotion of the above program, the communist members of the Congress shall contemplate to form a republican wing in the All-India Congress Committee with the cooperation of the left wing of the Congress.

(c) That all the activities regarding elections to legislatures, municipalities, local boards, etc. shall be decided upon by the central executive from time to time.

(d) All important issues coming before the All-India Congress Committee shall first be discussed in the party group and instructions issued to its representatives in the All India Congress Committee to that effect.

(e) The members of the party shall not be members of any communal organisation and shall always try to expose the class character of such movements.

#### *Trade Union Congress*

7. Whereas it is found that the middleclass leadership in the All-India Trade Union Congress has solely been responsible for keeping itself isolated from the proletariat, it is necessary that the communist members do enter the Trade Union Congress, and organise labour unions and get them affiliated to the Trade Union Congress, with a view to wrest it from its present bourgeois leadership. The comrades' section in the Trade Union Congress will put up the following minimum program as the immediate demands of the working class: (a) Legal limitation of work to eight hours a day, (b) legal minimum wage, (c) abolition of employment of women and children under the age of 18, (d) abolition of employment of women underground, at night and in dangerous occupations, (e) schemes of maternity benefits, old age, sickness and unemployment insurance, (f) workmen's compensation and employers' liability, (g) freedom of organisation of trade unions, exemption from liability for the acts of individual members and freedom to take part in political activities (h) weekly payment of wages and (i) legislation providing for adequate safety devices in factories and mines

8 The Communist Party of India approves of the program laid down by the workers' and peasants' parties of

Bengal, Bombay and Rajputana, and enjoins the members to work out this program. The members shall try to form similar organisations where such do not exist

9 This party congratulates Awari and his colleagues who are trying to establish their right to carry arms by "satyagraha" against the arms act

10. This meeting emphatically condemns the recent order of the government of India, in proscribing all advanced literature from entering into this country, as an attempt to stifle the legitimate growth of free thought

11. This meeting condemns the unjust terms that have been forced upon G. R. Darveshi by the North-West Frontier Province government.

12. This meeting condemns the action of the North-West Frontier Provincial government in interning Shafiq who was to have presided over the proposed conference of this party in November last

13. This meeting sympathises with Usmani and Akbar Khan in their sufferings in jail.

14. The Communist Party of India welcomes Dange back from jail and hopes that he will be able to resume his activities immediately he recovers his health

15. The Communist Party of India congratulates Babu Subhas Bose on the courage he has shown in not accepting the terms of government at the sacrifice of his principle.

#### OFFICE-BEARERS

##### *Presidium*

Muzaffar Ahmad	37 Harrison Road, Calcutta
J. P. Bagerhatta	Rewari
G R Darveshi	<i>Mehnatkash</i> , Lahore
K. S Iyengar	Labour Kisan Office 22 South Beach Madras
S A Dange	Fanaswadi, Bombay

##### *General Secretary*

S. V. Ghate	Krishna Lodge, Bombay 4
S. H. Mistry (Treasurer)	Trinity Lane, Dhobitalao Bombay

*Executive*

M. Singaravelu	Labour Kisan Office, 22 South Beach, Madras
Hasrat Mohani	Kanpur
R S Nimbkar	Bombay 4
M A Majid	Mochi Gate, Lahore
K. N Joglekar	Congress Office, Bombay
S N. Tagore	Workers' and Peasants' Party, 37 Harrison Road, Calcutta
H A Halim	Workers' and Peasants' Party, 37 Harrison Road, Calcutta
S D Hasan	Labour Publishing House, Mochi Gate, Lahore

*Organs (Nonofficial)*

<i>Ganavani</i>	37 Harrison Road, Calcutta
<i>Mehnatkash</i>	Mochi Gate, Lahore
<i>Kranti</i>	Dwarkadas Mansions, Bom- bay 4

## VII. Release of S. A. Dange: Publication of "Hell Found" & Release of Shaukat Usmani: "Peshawar to Moscow" Published

### 20. AN INDIAN COMMUNIST?

We welcome Mr Dange on his release from imprisonment. Along with three other comrades, Dange was sent to prison for an alleged "bolshevik conspiracy" to overthrow the Indian empire. The real "crime" of Mr Dange and his fellow-victims of imperialist tyranny was that they attempted to organise a party of the working masses. Whatever the baseless charges on which they were sentenced to imprisonment, it is a fact that Dange and his comrades suffered for the masses of India. It is to be hoped that the released comrade will again throw in his lot with those who are working for the cause for which he has suffered.

In a meeting held in Bombay to receive Mr Dange, he is reported to have said:

"I am not a bolshevik. It is not a proper term, but I am an Indian communist, and I continue to be so."

We are afraid that this declaration, unless it is cleared, may be understood to contribute to a tendency of not only distinguishing between bolshevism and communism but also of creating a special Indian variety of communism.

The word bolshevism has its origin in the history of the Russian Social-Democratic Party. The majority section of the party which stood for revolutionary socialism was termed bolshevik (Russian: belonging to majority) and the minority which believed in constitutional or evolutionary socialism was called menshevik. Later on the

bolsheviks changed the name of the party and called it the Communist Party, while the mensheviks upheld the Social-Democratic Party. Bolshevism is not distinguished from communism, these are two terms which subscribe to the same philosophy, viz of revolutionary socialism. It is distinguished from menshevism or social-democracy which today is a counterrevolutionary force. Communists, or call them bolsheviks if you like, all over the world have the same program of bringing in socialism, they believe in class-struggle and the overthrow of capitalism by a revolutionary mass action of the proletariat. They do not believe in the counterrevolutionary theory of social-democrats who uphold that socialism can be brought by parliamentarism. We have a parallel in India where there are people who believe that India can get freedom through a revolution only and others who think that the country can win swaraj by parading in the council halls

Communist movement in a country must be a national section of the international communist movement, otherwise it cannot be communist and may degenerate into anything. Communists are the vanguard of the working class as a whole marching to liberate itself from capitalism and imperialism which are international world forces. They see the world under capitalism divided, not into nations, but into classes, the exploited and the exploiters, and always endeavour to show the working masses in each country that their struggle is only a part of the international class struggle which can succeed only by observing closest international class-solidarity. In subject countries like India, the first and foremost task of a communist is to overthrow foreign imperialism, and for that purpose to lead the struggle for national emancipation cooperating at the same time with all those who take part in it. The struggle for national emancipation in subject countries is also a part and parcel of the international class struggle against imperialism and capitalism, and therefore demands the coordination of all the struggling forces.

It is absurd to seek for a special Indian variety of communism. An Indian who calls himself a communist

must be a communist like the others in the rest of the world, otherwise he has so many other names to adopt, for instance a hindu or a muslim socialist (like christian socialist), gandhite or khaddarite socialist, etc. It is foolish to cloak reactionary and counterrevolutionary tendencies by calling them characteristically Indian.

*The Masses of India*  
Vol 3, No 7, July 1927

## 21. "HELL FOUND"

S. A. DANGE

(Excerpts)

### (1) FROM THE PREFACE

The difference between the *bourgeois-reformist* method of treating crime and criminals and the proletarian or communist method is this. Both the methods, the former represented by the school of Enrico-Fermi in Italy, and the latter by the USSR, abolish the word 'punishment' from their code and employ the term "measures of social defence". The American psychiatrists and followers of Lombroso made special studies of the criminal as a 'patient'. The Russian regime has adopted the best product of this bourgeois culture. But the essential difference between them lies in the fact that the reformist scientists pick up the criminal and study him in the given social conditions, all the while believing that the existing capitalist structure of society is best; while the revolutionary scientists working under the Marxist laws believe crime to be the outcome of the growing anarchy and insecurity of life in the capitalist structure working away at high speed without a plan for

and an eye on the essential needs of the individual members of society in their separate and collective aspects. Take the case of the United Provinces. It is densely populated, has the worst system of zamindari, where thousands of landless peasants starve and miles of talukdari estates lie idle. The peasantry is heavily in debt and intensely persecuted by the police and landlords. And the province is in the neighbourhood of Punjab, where, due to various reasons, there is a shortage of women. The natural result is that peasants threatened by starvation, civil jail, loss of cattle and all, sell their minor daughters, and a hideous traffic in women goes on, resulting in hundreds of convictions every year. The communist analysis leads not to a reformist solution of this phenomenon, that of preaching morals and religious sermons to those convicts in jail, but to an essentially radical solution, that of abolishing the huge landed-estates, which fatten the purchasers of women, and handing them to the liberated landless peasants and making them and their folk contented, so that they may not sell their children or become dacoits.

\* \* \*

To a Marxist or communist, it is clear that the state, whether here in India or in any so-called free country, not under a workingclass rule, is dominated by the bourgeoisie, i.e. the owning class, controlling the means of life, that this class being in a minority and living on the exploitation of the majority can retain its hold only by terrorism against the class which it exploits, i.e. the poorer workers, peasants and even intellectuals. Naturally, the laws of the state are the laws of this class, everything is for their convenience, comfort and domination. The majority of criminals and crimes are in one way or another actuated by motives of property, as everything in bourgeois society is based on *individual* and exclusive appropriation of property or things, to any extent. So the law, which is the law of the owning class (and this class is really composed of a few hundreds of big financiers, industrialists and their rich liveried intellectuals sitting in the legislatures) is

saturated with the spirit of vengeance against the criminal. The criminal must be dragged, kicked, flogged and bled till he shall no more think of raising a finger against the dominant class.

\* \* \*

In this connection, see the basic law of the UP jail manual (and it is almost the same everywhere).

*Article 978:—Labour in a jail should be considered primarily as a means of punishment and not of employment only; neither should the question of its being highly remunerative have much weight, the object of paramount importance being that prison work should be irksome and laborious and a cause of dread to evil-doers.*

The picture that you see in the following pages will show how mild the above words are for what is being done in the jails.

And who are the evil-doers? Except a handful, most of them are men, who could not find employment, who were too infirm to work and therefore had no other way to live in this planless society than to commit some nominal crime and go to jail, who as victims of the general bourgeois culture of competing and amassing, found themselves outstripped and starved, or those who are excessively ground down by exploitation. The section quoted above holds not only for labour in jail, but for labour in general too!

\* \* \*

Against this, see the law in the workers' republic Article 9 of the Soviet criminal code, says,

"Measures of social defence may not pursue the aim of inflicting physical suffering or degrading human dignity nor does it aim at vengeance or punishment."

That is the difference between the bourgeois-reformist method and a fundamentally radical Marxist method.

## (2) FROM CHAPTER I

I do not wish to go into a detailed account of what has become famous as "the Bolshevik Conspiracy Case of Kanpur" then extensively reported by the Indian press. The case was merely a rehearsal on the stage for the benefit of the public of a drama that had been nicely and minutely planned and executed behind the curtain. The case was the outcome of state policy rather than of the anxiety to avert a bloody revolution or suppress lawless revolutionary organisations, threatening the stability of imperialism, which is too steel-framed and collected to become uneasy by the discontented gestures of a handful of young men. This impression of mine is not wrong because I received its confirmation from unexpected quarters. It was during the trial that a personage, highly placed in the counsels of the government, remarked to me in the course of a nonofficial talk, 'For years since the bolshevik revolution of 1917, the government has been asserting that the bolsheviks are aiming a blow at the British empire, through Indian revolutionaries, whom they are financing. The Indian press and leaders of public opinion have been denying this and accusing the government of conjuring up phantoms, with a view to kill Indian nationalism. If we win this case (I was suspicious of an arch smile, when the gentleman put in that "if") we shall prove to the world the truth of our assertion.' In estimating the motive behind this case, I would prefer going even further than the author of the above statement. When the case was instituted by the government of India, the Labour Party had already come into power and was negotiating a commercial and political treaty with Moscow, as it believed with many prominent economists that unless the granaries and markets of Russia were opened to western Europe, the reconstruction of Europe would be an insurmountable difficulty. But the financial rings of the conservatives in alliance with some "labour-imperialists" of the Labour Party were determined to prevent the rapprochement, and were throwing obstacles in the way, by accusing Moscow of having intentions

on India Lord Curzon had been ceaselessly harping on this, and by means of forged documents trying to catch the bolshie unwary. But, the genius of M. Chicherin was too strong for Curzon's fakes, though the British press carefully avoided giving publicity to the crushing replies that were thrown back on Curzon's face.\* Lord Reading, the viceroy of India, coming of a famous house of financiers, bore no love to the labour government and naturally was all anxious to replenish the quiver of the rings to fight the treaty of the labour government. What finer arrow could there be than if it were proved that bolshies, with whom the labour government was arranging peace treaties, were stirring up revolution in India, the brightest jewel in the British crown! If the labour government wanted to lose India, then well they might embrace Red Moscow! The blow was subtly planned and well timed. And lo, the organisation of a mighty revolutionary party was brust upon the eyes of a wondering world. The verdict of justice, "blind, with the sword", was demanded, eloquence gushed forth in torrents, painting the blood-red horrors in which India might have been steeped, had not the able, indefatigable intelligence bureau watched night and day. Justice thought, prayed, wrote and convicted. Jubilation flew on the wires and before the bolshevik plenipotentiaries in London were hurled the words 'You talk of treaty, but what of your conspiracies in India'?

The financial rings thundered above and undermined below till the vacillating labour government tottered down and machiavelsm built a tomb over it with the cement of the 'Zinoviev Letter'. Thus in my opinion, the bolshevik conspiracy case merely a flint in the armoury of imperialism, thrown at the Labour Party's head to bleed it, and if I am not wrong, it did it copiously.

Whatever the manifold purposes of government in instituting this case, the counsel for government in intro-

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\* All these forgeries and the imperialist conspirators behind them are collected and described in a publication of the British Communist Party entitled "Anti-Soviet Forgeries" with facsimile photographs of the forged documents.

ducing the case in the sessions made a statement that we were not being prosecuted for advocating communism but purely under section 121A of the Indian penal code, i.e. for conspiring to deprive the king-emperor of his sovereignty of British India by violent means. This was all legal jargon, hiding the real issue, because all the documents put forward by government as their evidence, were mere letters alleged to have passed between us and Mr. Manabendranath Roy in Berlin. Roy's letters to us discussed nothing but the advisability of starting a militant labour party, with a communist outlook. The question of violence occupied an academic importance in his letters, in order to guard, from the very beginning, the party being sidetracked on the lines of menshevism or the petty-bourgeois socialism of the British Labour Party or gandhism.

However, the intentions of government were foiled. What was a spectre as Marx would have termed it, striding unnoticed, became a body palpable and perceptible, and within a year of our conviction the Indian Communist Party was established. The government was taken at its word and communism began to be avowed openly, though not for the first time.

## 22 "PESHAWAR TO MOSCOW"

SHAUKAT USMANI  
PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

We have great pleasure in presenting this little narrative to the public. The book is very important in as much as it throws some light on one of the most notable events in the recent Indian history, viz the hijrat (religious emi-

gration) of Indian muslims. It reveals the pan-islamist mentality of the khilafat enthusiasts. Nobody has as yet written about the fate of the unfortunate muhajirs. This little book will fill up the gap to some extent.

Secondly, it describes the travel and adventures in Afghanistan, Turkestan and Russia in one of the most critical periods in the world's history. It is the first book of its kind giving impressions of Central Asia in the melting pot. The author is the first Indian who has written about Central Asia in the great revolution from personal experience. Many books have been written about bolshevik Russia by prejudiced writers. But here we get a glimpse of Russia and her condition in one of the most rigorous and extensive blockades in history.

The importance of the book lies in that the author had the opportunity of personal intercourse with the famous revolutionary leaders like Lenin, Trotsky, Chicherin, Bukharin and some famous Asiatic leaders like Enver Pasha and HM the Amir Amanulla Khan.

For the younger generation these reminiscences of thrilling adventures will serve to encourage the spirit of travel and adventure which is sadly lacking in our young men.

The viewpoint of the muslims of Afghanistan and Turkestan ought to serve as an eyeopener to our muslim brethren. They will no doubt be shocked to learn that the khilafat for which they made so much ado, meant nothing to muslims outside India.

One may not agree with the author in all his views and observations, but it cannot be denied that it will show to some extent the real state of things, as observed by an eye-witness.

This book is really in the form of some notes from a diary. Therefore it is hoped that the irregularity and unorthodoxy of the language in some places will be excused.

The book had to be printed in a great hurry. Therefore it is possible that some mistakes may have been overlooked. No doubt the indulgent reader will forgive us for the same.

Lastly P. Spratt author of *India and China* must be thanked for writing a few words introducing the author to the public.

The Hindi version of this book is being published by the Pratap Press, Kanpur.

INTRODUCTION  
PHILIP SPRATT

I agreed to write a short preface to this book, for two main reasons. First, I wished to try to do justice to one who has suffered, and is suffering, as much as almost any for the cause of freedom—the freedom of the oppressed nations. And secondly, I wished to do what little an individual voice can, to expose and protest against the methods of the Indian police, or rather the criminal investigation department, special branch.

Shaukat Usmani left India with one of the earlier batches of the hijrat pilgrims, and eventually reached Soviet Russia. I am not concerned so much with his travels outside, with which he himself deals, as with his experiences on his return to India. Here, such of his comrades as had come back, he found practically without exception, in prison, for the crime of visiting Soviet Russia and studying at the Eastern University at Moscow. One, on the basis of the flimsiest evidence, was condemned to ten years, for "conspiring to deprive the king-emperor of his sovereignty of British India". These monstrous proceedings, it should be said, cannot be explained simply by the panic of the government at the success of the noncooperation movement. For they are still going on. The victim of the case just mentioned is still in gaol. Another man is still detained, years after the completion of his sentence, in the remote village where he was born. And another, so late as August 1927, was sentenced on his return from Russia to five years RI for the same "crime". In this case, that of

Fazal Ilahi, there was no evidence whatever of conspiracy. There was merely "testimony" leading to the presumption that the accused was a communist.

In these circumstances Usmani, not unnaturally, avoided the police. But he was in the end captured at Kanpur in May 1923. He was sent at once to Peshawar—a favourite place for these shady proceedings, there being no juries, or newspaper correspondents or public opinion. Here he was kept for twenty days, not at Peshawar itself, but at the police thana at a neighbouring village. Thence he was compelled to walk each day to the police officer at Peshawar and back, a distance of about fifteen miles, in bar-fetters, without the usual leather guards. His legs in consequence bled profusely. He was not unchained even at night, and was allowed no medical attention. He was shown a list of names, and asked to give information about them. He was first offered inducements, and subsequently given the treatment just described. His tortures were stopped only when information leaked out and protests appeared in the press. Thereafter he was kept in prison for a year. In May 1924 he was sentenced to four years RI as the chief accused in the Kanpur "bolshevik" conspiracy case, and was released in August 1927. None of his personal possessions, not even his spectacles, were returned to him.

Ever since his release he has been followed by CID agents. His personal friends, whom he wished to visit after an absence of five years, have been warned against him and even frightened into refusing to see him. He does not dare to visit his birthplace as it is situated in an Indian feudal state where, it is to be assumed, his liberty would not be worth a moment's purchase. It should have been mentioned that at the time of his arrest, his whole family, parents and children, were also arrested and kept in police custody for ten days.

Such is the Indian police.

It is good that such a book as this should be published in India. Information about Soviet Russia other than that supplied by the official news agencies, is scanty anywhere, but especially so in this country. And India has much to

learn, as Usmani points out, from a country whose conditions are in many respects similar to her own. I personally found the manuscript extremely interesting, both for the subject matter, and for the obvious sincerity of the writer. And I think that the narrative of one who has seen as much as he has, and written it down so honestly, will still convey valuable truth to the public, although it appears, through circumstances out of the author's control, five years too late.

## VIII. "INDIA AND CHINA" BY AN INTERNATIONALIST

### 23. "INDIA AND CHINA" (Excerpts)

#### PREFACE

The bulk of the present pamphlet was published in the form of articles in the *Indian National Herald* in January and February of this year, and our thanks are due to Mr Horniman for permission to use them. Except for verbal alterations and a few additions they are reprinted without change.

We desire to emphasise one or two points which are not brought out adequately in the text.

First, the method adopted in examining the situation in both India and China directs attention primarily to the material factors, economic, geographical, military, etc. at work in those countries. We believe that the conscious adoption of such a method is necessary in the study of political and social affairs, in general\*. In this case, the

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\* For an examination of Indian conditions from this point of view we can most heartily recommend *Modern India*, by R. Palme Dutt, 1926, Sunshine Publishing House, Princess Street, Bombay, Price Rs 2.12. A short book, it covers the whole field in a masterly manner. For China useful and informative books are *The Awakening of China*, by James H. Dolsen, Daily Worker Publishing Co, Chicago, USA, *British Imperialism in China* by Elinor Burns, Labour Research Department, London, Price Re 1.00.

"materialist" examination of the situation concentrates upon industrialisation and the action of the industrial working class as decisively important factors in the development of China and its struggle against oppression. In the present stage of world history, the stage which sees both the dominance and the decay of imperialism, we believe this to be the case universally, and the experience of China bears us out. There the working class is now the undisputed leader of the fight for emancipation. To transfer this result mechanically to India may seem ridiculous at the present moment. Yet the facts are that the Indian working class is relatively more numerous than the Chinese, it is no less educated, it is heavily concentrated in the chief centres, and indeed it has already shown in several big strikes its growing capacity for loyalty and united action. It is safe to predict a great future for the Indian workers.

Second, the articles were written shortly after the Gauhati session of the National Congress, in a period when the Chinese national forces were achieving big successes, and were meeting with more and more open resistance from the imperialist powers. Nevertheless the leaders of Indian nationalism did nothing. Our perhaps rather bitter comments on this inaction seem to us still to be justified, since, although some protest has been made, it was of a very formal lifeless character, and was directed on purely nationalist grounds against the use of Indian troops without the consent of Indian people. There is still shown a complete lack of understanding on the one hand of the importance of the Chinese movement in itself, and on the other of its importance to India, and the response which it should call forth in India.

It is therefore very refreshing to find Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, in the *Indian National Herald* (29 March) giving a just appreciation of the state of things.

'The Chinese revolution is not an event of local interest and importance. It is a world phenomenon of the greatest historic importance. On the issue in China depends the future of Europe and Asia, and the country which will be

most affected by the issue will be India. For us it is not a matter of pious hopes and empty sympathy."

His suggestions of a widespread campaign of popular enlightenment, of interchange of delegations by the Kuomintang and the National Congress, and the dispatch of an Indian ambulance corps as a demonstration of sympathy, are heartily to be supported.

Similarly it is with enthusiasm that we hail the success of the Brussels congress, at which Pandit Nehru was the Indian delegate, for the formation of the 'League against Imperialism and for National Independence'. In view of their importance some of the resolutions passed at this congress are published as an appendix.

Finally we wish to draw attention to the possibilities of the immediate future. We remark below that in view of her lack of success in attempting to corrupt or split the Chinese forces, Britain is inevitably pursuing a policy of force. We further state that although up to the present the mutual antagonism of the powers has been such that Britain has been almost isolated, nevertheless the fundamental interests of imperialism are the same, and the different powers will unite against a nationalist government which definitely sets its face against exploitation of the masses, but on the contrary bases itself on their support. This the Canton government is doing, and Britain and America are already in open military alliance. Every effort is being made in both countries to stir up a war-psychology. We read that the American population is receiving with horror the news of the "atrocities" at Nanking (some foreigners were pursued along the streets, had their clothes torn, and were subjected to "indignities"). In reply British and American warships bombarded the town for three hours). The British press is full of pictures and stories of the troops. Areas beyond the Shanghai concessions are already occupied, and trenches prepared. The subsidies to the northern generals become more frequent and more obvious.

The struggle of the Chinese nationalist movement has only begun. The foreigners, with sound strategy, have

withdrawn from untenable positions at Hankow and other river ports. But they mean to fight to the end for Shanghai. They have the forces on the spot, both at Shanghai itself and at Honkong, ready for an attack upon Canton.

This immediate issue overshadows every other which this pamphlet attempts to raise. Imperialism means war, and nothing but the most tremendous effort on the part of all the forces opposed to it, can prevent war.

While this pamphlet is still in the press, news arrives that important conflicts have occurred between the two wings of the Kuomintang. It is not possible yet to say how serious these differences are, but even if an open split results, it cannot alter our attitude, or the final results. What has probably happened is that a small section of the "right" or capitalist wing of the Kuomintang has seceded, under the threats and promises of imperialist agents, and possibly under the glamour attaching to a somewhat Napoleonic figure, the successful and ambitious young general Chiang Kai-shek.

The genuine remains of the Kuomintang will be more than ever labelled "bolshevik", but this must not blind us, any more than similar propaganda in the past, to its genuine nationalist nature, nor to the necessity of cooperation and support for it.

#### CHAPTER 1: INDIAN NATIONALISM AND CHINA

The purpose of this pamphlet is to emphasise and elucidate some of the main facts of the present situation and recent events in China, with the object of pointing out the significance of these events in relation to presentday India, and indicating some of the lessons to be drawn from them.

It is at first sight for the greatest surprise that, with very few exceptions, the leaders and organs of Indian

nationalism have taken practically no notice of the events in China during the last two years. Particularly is this the case in the past six months, when the armed forces of the Chinese nationalists have been going from success to success, until nearly half of China is in their hands, and the population is everywhere rising to greet them—when the imperialist powers, and Britain most of all, have been turning this way and that, now seeking for a compromise, now threatening, and often actually using, armed force, but obviously all the time in a state of the most acute at the prospect of defeat on this highly important front, China.

What should we think of a man whom we find engaged apparently in a life-and-death struggle with an assassin; we recognise in the murderer an old enemy, and join in the attack; but our friend the original victim, instead of assisting us, that by our joint efforts the criminal may be overcome, coolly walks away a few paces, and begins to make critical remarks, impartially estimating the chances of the struggle, and commenting on the technique of the antagonists? We should conclude either that he was a fool, or that his fight with the common enemy was no very real or important fight in his eyes after all.

But this is the situation in regard to India, Britain and China. Indian nationalist leaders, so they have told us, have been fighting British imperialism for years. It would be easy to quote scores of speeches in which that struggle has been described exactly in the terms of the boxing-ring or the battle-field. Another conflict starts, or rather suddenly develops to a very acute pitch, in which British imperialism is again one of the chief antagonists, trying by any and every means to hold down the struggling Chinese nationalists. Do the leaders of Indian nationalism rush to the assistance of their brothers in distress? Alas! Perhaps they cannot do anything very practical, but no doubt we shall find them eagerly cheering on the Chinese with encouraging words?

We need only quote a leading article from the chief organ of Indian nationalism, *Forward* (29 September 1926):

'The British government has shown commendable patience and forbearance in dealing with China.'

The National Congress, the highest authority and universally recognised expression of Indian nationalism, met on 25-29 December last. Now at that moment the struggle in China was at a critical state. The whole world we may say, was anxiously speculating as to whether Britain would plunge into armed struggle and thus precipitate an appalling war. An emphatic resolution of opposition to such a course passed enthusiastically by the Gauhati congress would have had a very weighty effect in staying Britain's hand—for India, if "the brightest jewel in the imperial crown" could very easily in such circumstances become Britain's achilles' heel.

What happened? Such a resolution was actually on the agenda, from the Bengal congress committee, yet either it was not discussed at all, or else it was passed or defeated with so little fuss that, so far as we are aware, no further mention of it has occurred in the press.\*

Mr Gandhi, it is true, has allowed it to be announced (*Evening News*, 20 January) that he wishes to cooperate with the Chinese in a campaign against "western civilisation". This is his one and only mention of the subject that we are aware of. Such a statement, unsupported by any further campaign is of no use whatever practical politician should know.

This long introduction will not have been in vain if it has served to underline two important facts : (1) that a series of events of the most world shaking importance is now proceeding, with breathless rapidity, in China, and (2) that the leaders of Indian nationalism, whom we should expect to be more interested than almost anybody else, seem to see nothing existing in this, but rather appear to gaze upon it from afar with, if anything, a slightly disapproving air.

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\* The resolution was not brought forward either in the open congress, or in the subjects committee.

It needs no further emphasis here that a struggle which promises within a few months or years to release one quarter of the human race from the bondage of imperialism is a very important thing. It need hardly be repeated that this thing should be of special importance to those who claim to represent and lead the struggle of a further fifth of the human race, namely the population of India, to escape from that same bondage.

It may be objected here that the Indian nationalist movement repudiates the Chinese on account of the violent character of the latter. The argument on nonviolence we shall deal with in its place. All we need say here is that it does not meet our point. There has been effectively no public discussion which could reveal the attitude of the Indian nationalist movement. The crime of the leaders is that, chiefly by silence, but partly by their lukewarm and even hostile comments, they have obscured the matter from the sight of the Indian masses, and thus prevented not only the valuable invigorating response which the Chinese successes might have aroused in India, but even any general discussion of the lessons to be drawn from them.

Clearly the first lesson we can learn, even from so short a summary of the facts, is, that the present leaders of Indian nationalism as a whole, as we said above, either are fools, or are not seriously engaged in the struggle against imperialism. It is simply one more of a long series of illustrations of a fact which needs no further proof, that these leaders are utterly useless for the purpose which they are supposed to fulfil, because on all important questions—the Chinese question among others—their interests and their views are those of their imperial masters.

But what, it may be asked, could a sincere and loyal nationalist leadership do to assist the Chinese? We have indicated above that an important step would have been the simple passing of a resolution at the national congress, if adequate publicity and reinforcement by speech and pen had been given before and after. The political value

of a campaign of mass propaganda and agitation can be very great.

No political event of any importance takes places in modern times without reaction in other countries. The successes of the Chinese nationalists have been followed with interest by thousands and indeed millions of sympathisers in all parts of the world, and great campaigns designed to express sympathy and to prevent the intervention of imperialist governments have been conducted in the press and on the platform in America, Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and indeed all countries with a developed labour or nationalist movement. Even in Java, the ignorant and backward peasants and industrial workers have held large enthusiastic meetings, and collected money for this purpose.

It is said that the Indian masses have no international interests or consciousness. Our reply, if the statement were not false, would be that the sooner such a consciousness is aroused the better. That it is false is shown by the action of the Indian miners during the general strike and the great mining lockout last year, or even better by the influence of the Russian revolutions of 1917 upon the peasants and industrial workers of India.

Such an excuse will not do. The masses of India owing on the one hand to bad leadership, by a class whose interests are opposed to theirs, and on the other to skilful repression by the government, have sunk during the last five years into profound apathy. But on this issue they could have been, can still be, roused once more to a consciousness of their condition and of the possibility and the necessity of the Chinese masses to victory.

#### CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

Our last section ended with the definite query, what can we learn from the Chinese experience? We propose to conclude with some attempt to answer this.

First, a question of strategy, and yet really a deeper and wider question than one of mere strategy, which we have referred to several times already, viz that of the relation of our national struggle with the masses. Every line of approach leads to the same conclusions, as many of leaders have testified in recent years, and the approach via China does so equally. We must found our movement upon the masses, more, identify our movement with the masses.

How can this be done? China here gives us a lead. It is not merely a question of propaganda, of spreading of opinions, but of organisation. The National Congress, the acknowledged representative of the Indian nation, corresponding roughly to the Kuomintang, must take up the concrete demands and needs of the workers and peasants (for the limitation of hours of work, wage-increases, control of workshop conditions, compensation for accidents, unemployment, etc., for the reduction of the demands of landowners, moneylenders and the government upon the peasantry, for freedom of association, for universal education, etc., etc.) and with these as basis it must use its unique authority and resources for building up the workers' militant trade-union movement and the peasant unions, as has been done in China. Such organisation can attack the government and the whole capitalist oppression, as no other weapon can.

But on this point we can get a further lesson. These tasks, imperative as they were, were only taken up in China actually under the pressure from the masses themselves, led by their representatives in the "left-wing" of the Kuomintang. Similarly here, we require a party in the Congress to represent the workingclass and peasantry, and to urge and force upon the Congress generally the realisation of its duty in this matter. Such a project has been in the air for some time. It must be realised as quickly as possible.\*

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\* Parties of this nature are now in existence in Bengal and Bombay.

Overwhelmingly important though it is, we must content ourselves here with emphasising this point once more, and proceed to other considerations.

The Chinese have profited considerably, and will continue to do so, from the support they receive in other countries. Their fight, though a national one, is also international. In other words, imperialism is worldwide, and the opposition to it is also necessarily worldwide. A striking instance is the refusal of the militant Australian seamen to cooperate in the transport of troops to China. This forcible expression of their intensions, combined with the obvious hostility of opinion generally, compelled the government of Australia to fall into line.

The British government has undoubtedly been hampered in its dealings with China by the sympathy of the British workers for the Chinese, particularly in view of their general activity and increasing militancy during the past year. "Hands off China" committees, national and local, have been in existence for months and have kept up propaganda and agitation against intervention in China. Similarly the sympathy of the Soviet Republics for the nationalist movements has helped to restrain British official policy. The spectacle of Indian opposition, real, though largely unexpressed, has no doubt had the same effect.

We also in our future struggles must not fail to secure support of this kind wherever it is obtainable, first among other oppressed peoples all over the world (they are now forming a league for mutual assistance), in China, Korea, Siam, Java, Persia, Egypt and other parts of Africa, etc. and second in international, and particularly the British, labour movement. It would be as well, in this connection, to dispel if possible some doubts about the attitude of British and European labour to Indian and colonial affairs. In the old days, when British capital operated at home, and drew its profits from India mainly by **exchange, taxation, rent, etc.** British labour shared the profits to a certain extent, and hence shared also the views of the capitalists about Indian independence. But times have now

changed. More and more capital deserts Britain, leaving the British workers unemployed, and is invested in Indian and other colonial industry, where owing to the scandalously bad conditions, goods can be produced more cheaply and higher profits made than in Britain. The competitive effect of this is most unfavourable to British labour, which thus becomes directly interested in securing Indian freedom from the exploitation of British capital. Further, British labour, which because of these conditions, is being confronted with the task of taking over political power from the capitalists, seeks a political ally in India, which also desires the overthrow of British imperialism. Thus on this question our interests and theirs are identical.

In opposition to this, many will recall the attitude of the MacDonald government to Indian independence, and as the *Herald* remarked the other day, is precisely similar attitude towards China. We may safely say that disappointment in both cases is not confined to India. There has been ever since the time of the labour government, and indeed before, a great ferment in the ranks of British labour, which is gradually coming to realise its true interest in this matter. This ferment in one form is a movement against the old leaders like MacDonald, who represent the imperialist views of the past generation of labour, not the anti-imperialist views of the present. The Scarborough trades union congress, by its resolution on imperialism, showed this tendency. But even yet the old generation of leaders retains its hold, partly because of the inevitable "lag" and its grip upon the bureaucracy of the labour movement and partly owing to the conscious support, e.g. in the press, given to them by the capitalist class. Time is on our side, however, and we can safely depend upon British labour to support us more and more strongly as time goes on. It has already forced the Labour Party leaders to change their policy towards China, at least outwardly, so that one Dr Guest, more honest than the rest, has resigned.

But, it is hardly necessary to add, we cannot expect

support in the future from other parts of the world if we do not first organise for it, and second give such support ourselves when occasion arises. We are at last beginning to see where our true interests lie in connection with China and though many would like more energetic and effective action than is being taken at the moment, at any rate we have begun to move.

Similarly in connection with the international labour movement. It is safe to say that very few people in India, for example at the time of the British general strike in May of last year, realised what an important event it was in itself, and what a vital influence it could have had upon our own affairs. This was seen to a certain extent in China, where many meetings and demonstrations of sympathy were held, and money was collected for its support. One of the many signs of our political backwardness is this inattention to world politics, and concentration on what we regard as our own affairs. It may be hoped that the Chinese revolution will have the effect of opening our eyes to the importance for us of events taking place in other parts of the world.

The next great lesson which the experience of China can teach us is on the question of violence and nonviolence. Hardly any controversy, even that over cooperation and Council entry, has so disturbed and split our forces as this. All our cultural heritage equally with that of the Chinese, and the natural feelings of men, whether educated or uneducated, acting in the ordinary business of life, are against violence and in consequence of our looking upon the question in this narrow and partial manner, the doctrine of nonviolence has triumphed. But although it is still far from being an immediate practical question, the experience of our own movement must already have caused doubts about the wisdom of the decision. Any further light which can be thrown upon from abroad must be welcomed.

China which provides the closest parallel to our own case, is the best example to take, but the experience is becom-

ing more and more common. Even the while "aristocrats of labour" of Britain are finding from the actual experience of the past few years that they must organise "workers defence corps" for the protection of their organisation and activities from the forcible repression which imperialism in its declining stages attempts against them. The experience of China points in the same direction.

What weapons do they adopt? What are their methods? Not, as the imperialist press in its cartoons suggests, the bomb of the assassin or the stab in the back at midnight. Naturally, there, as here, irresponsible individuals are tempted to take this heroic but foolish course. Not, again, armed assaults upon the concessions and the massacre of their populations. They leave that sort of thing to their imperialist opponents.

As the *Bombay Chronicle* well put it (20 January) "They (the British) have climbed down as gracefully as it can be done. They have tried to give a belated unofficial recognition to Nationalist China, but the climbdown coincides disconcertingly with the fact that the Chinese national army is a million strong." Although we do not agree that it was a climbdown, we realise the impossibility of any Chinese freedom without an army "a million strong". In China the nationalists have from the start been compelled to defend their very physical existence by force. Here we are not quite so badly off. Our leaders are not usually executed without trial, they are simply imprisoned, with or without that formality. But if we may express a general personal view, it is that practically no fundamental social change, in present conditions, takes place without the use or threat of force. It is of no use to talk of educating ourselves up to complete nonviolence while we have no control of the means of such education, or of the material conditions of life which determine our spiritual advancement or backwardness. Hence we are compelled to obtain control of those means and material circumstances by such methods as we can adopt in practice. All experience including the Chinese, it seems to us, supports this view.

We have selected three important points on which, we think, the Chinese movement by its example can help us and give us practical instruction in the art of obtaining freedom. But a very great service which it can do our movement even now is that of encouragement and inspiration. As we read in the press from day to day of this advance or retreat, of this diplomatic concession gained or withheld, and realise that possibly within a few months will have been achieved one of the greatest steps in the struggle of the human race towards freedom, we cannot but be inspired with an increased desire to do likewise. It is possible in China, why not in India?

We must do everything that is possible to bring a knowledge of the facts and an appreciation of their meaning, before the widest masses of the people and from their response both ourselves and our Chinese allies will reap the benefit.

#### 24. THE ECHO OF CHINESE EVENTS IN INDIA

The mighty expansion of the national movement for freedom in China is making a tremendous impression in India. On the one hand we see great uneasiness among the British authorities, on the other hand a wide movement of sympathy on the part of the broad masses in India for China in her efforts to free herself.

The apprehensions of the British are proved by the fact that the British commander-in-chief of the army in India recently made a journey to the frontier between Burma, the south-eastern province of India, and the Chinese province of Yunnan.

This border zone of India is inhabited by wild tribes who do not actually submit to the British authorities. The British commander-in-chief has suddenly taken an interest in the

fact that slavery still exists in this district and as representative of the "highly developed British civilisation", has resolved to exterminate slavery. The brilliant victories of the national-revolutionary movement in China were however needed to call Great Britain's attention to it. The Indian nationalists have reacted in quite a different way to the events in China.

In this respect the following incident is very characteristic: At the beginning of December 1926, at a banquet in Calcutta, in honour of Lord Irwin, the viceroy, Langford James, the president of the European Association in Calcutta, said in his speech that for reasons of a "moral nature" the continuance of the British rule in India was "necessary for the good of the Indian themselves". In connection with this Sengupta, a prominent leader of the Swaraj Party, published an article in the press in which, among other things, he writes:

"Events in China ought to have opened the eyes of the extremely high-spirited members of the European colony. The Europeans in India should not forget that they form an insignificant minority; half a million desperate people would be enough to cause so much disturbance that the British would realise their unusual position in the country."

On the whole, the Indian press devotes great attention to the events in China. The following quotations from an article in *Forward*, the organ of the swarajists, are extremely characteristic of the attitude of mind of the Indian nationalists towards the great events on the frontiers of India.

"The sympathies of all who respect humanity and justice", writes *Forward* of 18 December, in an article entitled "Bravo China", "will naturally be on the side of the Chinese who are filled with the determination to force the foreigners to renounce the extraterritoriality and the other privileges which they extorted from the Chinese at the point of the bayonet. The economic boycott is one of the most effective measures used by the Chinese nationalists to break the back of British imperialism. They also take care to observe the wise rule of keeping their powder dry.

China has realised that nothing has so much influence on the peoples of Europe as force."

Finally, the paper points out that "the Indians are following China's present fight against foreign imperialism with eager attention".

*International Press Correspondence*  
Vol 7, No 12, 4 February 1927

## 25. INDIAN AID FOR CHINA

We have waited long for any practical proposal for the demonstration of India's sympathy with the Chinese national struggle or even for the establishment of the slenderest and most formal relations between the Indian and Chinese national movements. Many meetings were held to protest at the dispatch of Indian troops to act as the tools of British imperialism in China. But verbal protests and verbal sympathy were considered the utmost that could be offered. Even the Calcutta *Forward*, that has of late expressed its full support of Chinese national aspirations, not very long ago declared in a leading article:

"Every Indian nationalist will also deplore the fact that in India's present position of helplessness and bondage, she can do no more than send her silent prayers for the resurrection of China" (*People*, 20 February 1927).

Silent prayers! Is this really the utmost that Indian manhood can attain to? A prominent leader also said recently that if the British fight against the Chinese nationalists, he will pray, and he will ask every one to pray, that the British might be defeated. What spirit of sacrifice, what energy! If the problems of the world have to depend on prayers for their solution, they will remain

unsolved for many hundreds of years yet. The British imperialists are making us instruments to crush the Chinese revolution. Let us answer it not by prayers but by agitation among the mass of the Indian people, among the workers and peasants and their brothers sent out to defend imperialism, and by organising direct, concrete fraternal relations and cooperation between the Chinese and Indian nationalist movements. We welcome the fact that at last there are signs of something more than prayers taking place. The invitation of the National Congress for a delegation of the Kuomintang to visit India is a step in the right direction, and its acceptance with the appointment of Mme Sun Yat-sen to head the delegation, gives the promise at least of a real understanding of the importance of the Chinese revolution being arrived at. The Indian nationalists must see to it that nothing is allowed to hinder the establishment of relations between the two movements.

*Masses of India*  
Vol 3, No 4, April 1927

## 26. THE CHINESE REVOLUTION AND INDIA

J. T. MURPHY

There are more reasons than the fact that Great Britain has over sixty million pounds invested in Shanghai to make the British imperialists deadly enemies of the onward sweeping Chinese revolution. The south-western frontiers of this revolution meet the north-western frontiers of the Indian empire. Within the frontiers of that empire, 350 million people have been held in subjection for many generations by British imperialism which is now so scared over the prospects of the effects of a victorious Chinese revolution.

As a writer in the *Empire Review* says in an article on "The Indian Swaraj and World Politics": "Spreading as she does from the frontiers of Burma to the Pacific, a strong China might easily become a menace to Southern Asia." This is stating the case mildly, so permit Lord Meston, an ex-Indian governor, to say his say. Spreading himself over three columns of the tory paper, the *Sunday Express*, he says—in contemplation of the passing of Shanghai into the hands of the national-revolutionary forces—"If Shanghai falls it will not be Shanghai alone that we shall have lost. Throughout the entire eastern world one interpretation only will be put upon such a catastrophe, namely, that western civilisation has been defeated by oriental nationalism." He goes to say: "Every blunder, every hesitancy, every weakness on our part in China goes running down the whispering galleries of Asia and weakens our whole position in the east."

He is especially concerned with India, for here he goes on to say that there is a "persistent underworld of restless, fanatical hatred of the west and all that it implies in India". He concludes "That a weak or vacillating policy in China is a danger, sufficiently great in its reaction on those countries with which we are most closely allied, to reconcile all thinking Englishmen to the measures that are now being taken."

#### "SLAVES IN BURMA"

In another tory organ of the bourgeois press, Lord Birdwood protests against any possibility of the reduction of the military budget of India and warns the world against the bolshevik menace.

Still more direct in its relation to the important events developing in China is a visit of the British commander-in-chief to Burma. The British have suddenly discovered that in Burma there are slaves to be liberated and expeditions are sent there to abolish slavery in this benighted

country, and incidentally, to make a military inspection of the frontier of Burma which borders the frontier of the Chinese revolution.

All these facts point conclusively to the fear which reigns in the minds of British imperialists concerning this mighty revolutionary movement. And, of course, they have good reason to be alarmed. For ten years they have seen the USSR emerging from its difficulties growing in strength, and by its very existence inspiring the peoples of the east to gather their forces and rise for the liberation of the masses from the power of imperialism. To see this mighty revolutionary movement extending to the millions in China who, in the process of their struggle, realise more and more that the great friend of their liberation is the organised dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR, is driving them to a state of hysteria.

They know that liberated China must perforce beckon to the millions of India, Egypt, Palestine and Africa. They know that the masses of these countries are watching every step forward of the Chinese national army, and, steeped in a hundred years of experience of "how to deal with the Asiatics", they feel themselves impelled to discard even the semblance of liberalism in their policy and to attack the Chinese revolution with all their force. They regard the Asiatics as slaves and have determined that slaves they shall remain.

In the process they perpetrate blunder after blunder, and outrage upon outrage, not one of which passes unnoticed by the teeming millions of these countries. The Indian masses, for example, know full well their own experiences under British rule. They know the persecutions they have endured from their overlords and when they see the Chinese national army marching from victory to victory, when they see that the atrocities of Shanghai, of Wanhxien, and of Nanking are unable to deter the revolution, but on the contrary arouse the masses to more powerful organised action, then this is at once an inspiration and a lesson conveying new perspectives for their own future.

## A WARNING VOICE

For example, the organ of the Swaraj Party of India, the *Forward*, for 27 January 1927, writes: "If Japan has been spared the fate of China, India, Persia, etc., it is only because she too has taken a leaf out of the book of European imperialists, become a votary of force and has learned to pay European nations back in their own coin... The first condition of successful stand against white imperialism in Asia is to have a strong and independent China fully trained in the modern arts of warfare." This is at once a warning to the imperialists and a portent of coming events.

But this is not an isolated voice. In response to a speech made at a banquet by the president of the European Association in Calcutta in which this gentleman said: "A continuation of British rule in India was necessary for the good of the Indians themselves", a leader of the Swaraj Party writes: "Events in China ought to have opened the eyes of the extremely high-spirited members of the European colony. The Europeans in India should not forget that they form an insignificant minority. Half-a-million desperate people would be enough to cause so much disturbance that the British would realise their unusual position in the country." This is placing the finger on the pulse of British imperialism with a vengeance.

But not only is the warning sounded. On all hands the voice of protests is raised against the intervention in China and especially against the sending of Indian troops to crush the Chinese revolution. It is already reported that some of these troops have revolted and they are being taken away from Shanghai to Hongkong. The voice of protest extends from the most extreme right of the Indian national forces to every section of the Indian national movement. For example, the *Bombay Chronicle*, the organ of the rightwing nationalist elements, says in a leading article of 25 January: "The viceroy has announced that his masters installed at Downing Street and his government had agreed to co-operate by contributing a contingent including Indian troops as India happened to be the closest part from which

troops could immediately be dispatched to China. Is not the viceroy aware that India has always bitterly resented the use of her soldiers in Egypt, Mesopotamia and China, whenever they have been unscrupulously used to stem the tide of patriotism and trample down the leaders of their people? Has not the legislative assembly voiced the uncompromising opposition, that the people of this land object to this cheap device of using now again Indian troops as helpless mercenaries for helping selfish imperialist designs, and does not the very name of the Indian stink in the nostrils of all oppressed nations because they have been employed in sanguinary conflicts in Shanghai and Cairo? The long and shameless record of British relations with China include the long-continued opium poisoning of these people, the ruthless exploitation of its cheap labour and vast resources; and the fierce and oppressive treaties forced on its governments at the point of the bayonet disclose a purpose and a policy that cannot be called defensive."

#### AGAINST TROOPS GOING

All the leading papers of the nationalist movement have voiced their protest in more or less strong terms, and the national assembly itself desired to vote against the sending of troops to China. There is not the least doubt that this assembly, the majority of whom are the most constitutionally-minded of Indian politicians, would have carried a decision reflecting the great mass sympathy of the Indian people for the Chinese revolution. But the governor-general stepped in as the representative of the nervous British imperialists and forbade discussion on any kind on this question.

This decision at once had the opposite effect. It inflamed the Indian press and great mass meetings of protest were made on every hand. The following resolution adopted at great meeting in Bombay is a duplicate of the resolutions passed at many meetings in all the great cities in India: "This meeting of citizens of Bombay desires to express the sympathy of the Indian people for the great Chinese revolution, in the struggle which they are waging for their political and economic freedom. The meeting strongly protests

against the proposal of the government of India to send Indian troops for intervention in China and declares India's sense of humiliation at the use of her resources for the advancement of capitalist imperialism in the east."

The *Forward*, the organ of the Swaraj Party in Bengal, dismisses with strong contempt "the claim of any man, be the viceroy of India, to offer up the blood and lives of the sons of India to the service of Britain's mission on Chinese soil. India is not at war with China. India has no quarrel with China. If the truth is to be told, the people of India have the warmest sympathy for the Chinese in their desperate struggle against the unjust aggression of the foreign devils on her soil. Every true son of India will warmly sympathise with Chinese aspirations to recover their country from the deadly grip of unjust usurpation."

#### TOWARDS MASS ACTION

Such are the characteristic terms used with regard to this development. But a still further concrete example of the way in which the Indian masses feel in regard to the struggle of the Chinese people can be seen in the Indian ambulance men to serve with the Chinese national-revolutionary army. The Hindustani Seva Dal has undertaken to organise the contingent but we can say with certainty that the British government will prevent such a contingent leaving the shores of India. Nevertheless this action will only add fuel to the flames. The Indians themselves will learn from these events that until they also pass from the path of pacifism to that of organising the power of the masses and equipping them with the means of victory, their subjection will continue to endure.

This great lesson will be learned as every echo of the Chinese revolution falls upon the Indian masses. Indeed, they are learning. It is this fact which is driving the British imperialists to frantic anger. But what are anger and stupidity in face of hundreds of millions of slaves who have learned how to fight for freedom ?

## IX. Workingclass Struggles and the 8th Session of AITUC

### 27. THE INDIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

PHILIP SPRATT

It is commonly said, indeed so commonly that the phrase becomes mechanical, that the Indian trade-union movement "is still in its infancy". The present writer has frequently had occasion to combat the use of this phrase, not so much because it is untrue, as because it is misused. Every kind of mistaken policy, sheer inactivity, sectarianism, abstention from politics, are all excused on the same plea. And, on the other hand, it conveys the idea that the only policy for Indian labour is slow, patient progress on the present lines. It is not intended to deny the truth of what is meant by the statement, namely that Indian labour organisation is poor by western standards. But the analysis of the situation implied by it is inadequate. It is the thesis of this article that Indian unionism is in its second stage, in which it will remain until there come into being the conditions necessary for the next stage. That these conditions will ripen fairly soon is also expected, and indeed the beginnings are already to be seen.

The broad facts of the present position have recently been given very completely by Mr Joshi in his pamphlet, *The Trade Union Movement in India*, and the figures in the table below are taken from it. Though necessarily based to some extent on guess-work they are as sound as can be obtained and are near enough in any case for the present purpose.

Of the population of just over 300,000,000, 138,000,000, are taken to be workers, divided according to occupations as follows: agriculture—100,000,000, industry with mining—15,517,000, transport—1,900,000, commerce—8,000,000, domestic—2,500,000, public services—4,000,000.

The distribution by provinces is also important. In 1925 the numbers of workers in factories subject to the Indian factories act were: in Bengal—551,342, Bombay—370,460, Madras—123,563, Burma—97,346, UP—78,942, Bihar and Orissa—73,461, CP and Berar—67,104, Punjab—53,533, Assam—48,697, others—30,330, total—1,494,958.

Government employees, railwaymen & c will be distributed roughly according to population. The number of trade-unionists by provinces is more difficult to state, but is approximately as follows; Bombay (June 1927)—76,000, Bengal—probably 50,000, Madras—about 25,000, others up to a few thousands each. The total number of unions affiliated to the All-India Trade Union Congress is now 60, with 125,000 members.

It is also necessary to show roughly how the present situation is related to the past. Organisation on a large scale practically began in 1918, and at the first all-India trade union congress, in Bombay, October 1920, sixty unions were affiliated, having 140,000 members, while it was claimed that the total membership of unions expressing sympathy & c was 500,000. At the second congress at Jharia, November 1921, it was stated that 1,000,000 affiliated members were represented. It is doubtful if these numbers were actually even approached, but it is certain that there was a very big fall after 1922. At the end of 1924, only eight unions were affiliated, but by the time of the fifth congress in Bombay, February 1925, there were thirty-one unions with perhaps 80,000 members. The number has risen steadily from that time.

The more exact figures compiled by the labour office for the Bombay government show the same tendency. There were in the presidency in June 1922, twenty-two unions with 58,000 members; September 1923, nineteen unions with 42,000 members; September 1924, twenty-one with 47,000 members; and since then a fairly steady rise

to the present figures: sixty-six unions with 76,000 members.

The Bombay government commented on these facts in its criticism, dated January 1925, of the draft trade unions bill!

"It cannot be denied that the progress of trade-unionism in this presidency is at the best stationary at the present moment... the movement seems to be able to show solid progress only in Ahmedabad. The quarterly review... is a tale of lassitude and disillusionment. The present slump in the movement is due largely to falling prices and rising wages."

The "slump" in the movement after 1922 would be better shown by statistics of industrial disputes. The period, 1919-22, saw a very intense "strike wave", which fell away almost to nothing is to be seen between those days and the present. The first two congresses were practically huge demonstrations. At Jharia there were several thousand delegates, and a strike was held specially for the occasion in the local coalfield. Many of the best-known political leaders of the country were present at both congresses, and took active part. In the trade union congress, which the present writer attended in March this year, the number of delegates was under fifty, not more than ten of whom were workers. Perhaps a score or so of members of the public were present while at the place was Delhi, a few congress leaders "dropped in", but said nothing.

Mr R. K. Das in his book *The Labour Movement in India* (1923), remarks that, while in the first years of intense activity the unions were mainly industrial in type in the later period in which he was writing, craft unions also began to appear. This is an important observation, for though the unions which were then making their appearance, and by this time are the predominant type, are not craft unions in the strict sense, they do closely resemble craft unions in many ways. The figures of unions for the whole country, and especially for the Bombay presidency, show a large increase recently in the number

of unions, but a fall in the average membership, and this is characteristic.

The union movement of 1919-22, and that of 1924-27, are really quite distinct in organisation, composition, and aims, as well as in magnitude and methods. The difference has been compared plausibly with that which came about in the British movement between the thirties and the sixties of last century. The former movement was the product of a period of universal instability and excitement, and was fundamentally a revolutionary response to a revolutionary situation. The economic circumstances were enough to bring about universal discontent and protest. But the workers were also undoubtedly affected by the political excitement of the time. Thus, during the famous pilgrimage in 1921 of the primitive and ignorant plantation "coolies" of Assam and Bengal, some hundreds of them were suddenly and brutally cleared out of the Chandpur station yard at midnight by armed soldiers. They made no resistance, but shouted "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai". The revolutionary consciousness was of course generally extremely dim, but there can be no doubt that it was present. Strikes took place in every part of the country in all kinds of occupations. There was in most cases no organisation before the strike, but some kind of union was often established afterwards. All grades of workers took part. Frequently the demands of the strikers were not formulated until they had been out of some days, and they were then of an "extravagant" nature. The chief concrete demand was nearly always for wage increases, with reduction of hours a close second, but there were others often not an economic character. The unions then formed were what would be expected from the circumstances of their origin. They were industrial in type, but usually covered only a restricted area. They often had no regular membership, payments &c and have been, in fact, accurately described as "little more than strike committees".

There are now few remnants of those days. The present movement operates in conditions of economic stability and political quiescence. Only in Bombay in the last two or three years has the depression in the cotton industry

brought about a general tendency towards worsening of conditions. But the pressure has only sufficed to give a spurt to organisations of the present type.

The present movement, as has been remarked, while not strictly a craft unionism,<sup>1</sup> is similar in several respects to a typical craft movement, such as that in Britain in the middle of the last century. It is mainly a movement of the upper grades of workers for extremely limited aims. The organisation is fairly thorough, but narrow as regards activities, the classes of workers involved, and the areas from which they are drawn. There is little interunion organisation or solidarity, little class-consciousness, and a general avoidance of political activity.

It is proposed here to describe the trade-union movement as the writer has hitherto seen it, in a little greater detail, in the hope that it will be of interest to western readers, and will give some idea of present conditions and possibilities of development. The writer's observations are limited to the Bombay presidency and the Punjab, but conversations and published reports enable it to be said that statements applicable to those provinces are fairly sound in regard to the rest of India apart, perhaps, from Madras.

There are several unions which aim at covering the whole of India. They are mainly of long standing, contain only uppergrade workers, and remain practically aloof from the general movement.<sup>2</sup> The All-India Postal and

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1. Practically the only pure craft unions, apart from the Mechanical Engineers' Association of Akola, which could almost be called a professional association, are those constituting the Ahmedabad Textile Workers' Union. It is significant of the atmosphere in which this union and, indeed, the movement generally works, that craft unionism having been introduced some workers demand more of it than their officials are willing to give them.

2. Only the Bombay section of the Postmen's Union has been affiliated to the TUC, and has recently withdrawn because of the protest made by the Delhi TUC against the dispatch of Indian troops to China. About the same time the department of posts and telegraphs announced that unions of its employees must not affiliate to the TUC, as the latter is a political body.

RMS Association and the All-India Postal and Lower Grade Staff Union are loose federations of provincial and local unions. In some places one or other is split, so that in these towns there are three postal unions with perhaps not more than one or two hundred members each. Poona and Baroda are examples. The association was founded in 1906, and is well established, with nearly 40,000 members and a fund of perhaps a lakh of rupees. The union arose from local unions founded in 1918 and later. Both are recognised by the government.

The All-India Telegraph Association was founded in 1928 and has about 3000 members and substantial funds. A split occurred in 1923, when the All-India Telegraph Union was formed. The association contains all the Anglo-Indian and European members, while the union has only Indians. The lower-grade employees have several separate local unions.

There are other all-India federations such as that of the currency office associations.

The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) of India and Burma has 2250 members, almost all Anglo-Indians and Europeans (drivers, guards, &c). It was founded in 1898, and is thus the oldest union in India. It is strictly nonpolitical and tends to separate its members from other railway employees. It tried, successfully, to keep its members at work during the NW Railway strike of 1925. There should also be mentioned the All-India Railwaymen's Federation founded in 1925, after similar attempts had been made in 1921. It includes most of the railway unions, but its existence is only nominal. During the NWR strike of 1925 it sent its secretary to the scene of action, but according to Miller's report, he confined himself to mediation, and when that failed, to delivering defeatist speeches. During the BNR strike of this year the federation was entirely inactive.

The GIP Railway has at present four separate unions, all situated at Bombay. One is for the Bombay shops, two for the headquarters' clerical staff, and one for the suburban station-masters, clerks, &c. The total membership is 5000 to 6000. The railway employs in all over 100,000 men.

It is perhaps not an accident that the shop union, while perhaps less successful than the others in remedying grievances, &c is the only one affiliated to the TUC or the general labour board, and has recently established a branch at Kalyan. The BBCI Railway has three separate unions, one with about 2000 shopmen at Bombay, one with 6000 members of all grades at Ahmedabad, and one at Ajmer. Even the NWR has had separate unions at Karachi and Sukkur, but these are dying out. A separate union of railway clerks has recently been formed at Lahore, but it adopted Miller as its president, and is the result rather of discontent with the old union than of sectarian aims. Other militants, headed by Miller, have also recently broken away from this union and begun to organise a new one.

The NWR Union, at one time probably the most powerful union in Asia, really requires separate treatment. It began to organise in 1920, and in the same year fought a long and successful strike. The membership soon afterwards reached 85,000, out of about 125,000 then employed, and included all grades, among them a substantial proportion of the Europeans. It has fallen since then, with a temporary revival in 1925, owing partly to the general stabilisation of conditions, but also because of the special measures taken against it on account of the strategic importance of the line. Miller was imprisoned, other leading members were suborned, "tame" rival unions started, and so on. The paying membership of the existing recognised union is about 2000.

Unions are now in most cases confined practically if not formally to upper or skilled grades of workers. Thus, the Bombay Port Trust has three unions (with a purely theoretical joint committee), one for the 600 men on the Port Trust Railway, one for the 1000 workshopmen, &c. And this last is the most successful and is the only one "recognised". But the 2000 or more dock labourers are entirely unorganised. Even in these unions the upper grades are more strongly represented than the lower. The same thing applies in a less degree to the railway shop unions, and to others.

Thus the Bombay Port Trust Docks Staff Union shows the following composition (May 1927):

Grade	No Employed	No in Union	Wage rates (Rs per month)
Minor officials	120	105	125, 175, 225 (3 grades)
Senior clerks	200	175	85-110
Junior clerks	350	300	50-85
Menial staff	900	550-600	18-30

Similarly with the GIP Railway Workmen's Union which has the following membership (roughly) in the Matunga shops:

Grade	No Employed	No in Union	Wage rates (Rs per month)
Foremen	25	—	260
Chargemen	250	10	140-190, 200-260
Mistries	100	25	86-140
Workmen	4000	1500	50-86
Smiths	700	500	50-86
Assistants	2000	500	30-40
Apprentices	100	50	16-32
Coolies	1000	100	23-29

This is partly the result of the natural tendency of the unions to fall into the hands of the more literate members, who in present circumstances do not urgently require the strength to be derived from the solidarity of the lower grades. It is one aspect also of the general difficulty of organising the more illiterate workers, which is exemplified by the failure yet to establish a really successful union in the Bombay textile industry. There are here two unions, the Bombay Textile Labour Union, founded 1 January, 1926, which has about 7500 members, and the Girni Kamgar Mahamandal (Mill Workers' Association), founded 1923, with about 3000. The total number employed is about

150,000. Even the Ahmedabad Textile Workers' Union, with all its resources and traditions, is finding it difficult to keep its members. Though 20,000 strong in 1922, and successful in regaining nearly 15,000 members in two years after the strike of 1923, it is now losing members and has about 11,000 (out of over 50,000). Similarly the textile unions at Broach and Sholapur have disappeared, though on the other hand one has been recently established at Indore. The migratory character of mill labour, of which much has been said, is decreasing, and is no longer of much importance, at any rate at Bombay.

Many other classes of workers of similar skill and education remain practically or wholly unorganised—in Bombay, building, oil, gas, tramway, and other workers, and generally miners, jute workers, &c. Even when organised, either in their own or in predominantly upper-grade unions, workers of this kind tend to form a "floating population" in the union. All textile unions say the same thing. The Bombay Textile Labour Union had in January 1926 6000 members. It increased to over 9000 by the end of the year, but again fell to just under 7500 in June 1927. The Girni Kamgar Mahamandal speaks of a "steady stream of members through the union".

The aims of the present movement are very limited. Though petitions and memoranda are continually being presented on general grievances, such as wages and hours, they are almost always unsuccessful, and there are not the spirit or material resources necessary to conduct a struggle for improvements. Strikes occur fairly frequently, mainly on account of attempts to worsen conditions, or victimisation, which is very common. Employers and managers are almost always arbitrary and provocative in their attitude, except when dealing with superior grades.

The efforts of unions are, therefore, directed mainly towards the remedying of individual complaints, and in this the upper grades are markedly more successful than the lower. The usual complaints are excessive fines, arbitrary dismissals, irregularities in promotions due to bribery and favouritism, &c.

There is a general sentiment in favour of benefit funds. The older unions, especially the ASRS, have them in plenty, but the new unions and the customary contributions (1 to 8 annas per month) are too small to make them generally successful. Many unions already have death benefit schemes, and voluntary benefits with special subscriptions are becoming more common.

A few unions conduct educational classes for their members, the Girni Kamgar Mahamandal, the Bombay Postal and Lower Grade Staff Union, and the Ahmedabad Union in particular. (The last-named runs also temperance work, a research department, a hospital, &c) But the education provided in all cases the "three R's" (plus religious instruction at Ahmedabad). Joshi has attempted an interunion class in the history and principles of trade-unionism, but without great success.

The organisation of unions is commonly good for the very limited purposes. The proportion of actual to possible members is often high, at any rate for upper-grade workers. A committee is appointed in the early stages, usually representative of all grades, and is reelected at annual meetings. (It is not unusually, after the first month or two, for the annual meetings to be the only occasions on which the mass of members meet or take any part, save payment) The active officers, owing to the danger of victimisation, are often "outsiders". The union has an office, usually a small room with a typewriter. These are sometimes shared with another union, especially in Bombay, where unions are numerous and rooms expensive. The older and bigger unions have permanent officials, and many of the newer unions in Bombay employ for part of their time the paid servants of the Social Service League or the Central Labour Board. The committees in most cases meet regularly and conduct the small amount of routine business. Rules and reports are published, in many cases in vernacular and English editions. The older unions publish journals, which rival their European counterparts in dullness, and some of the newer ones publish occasional bulletins. Contributions are usually collected

at the place of work by committee members, and receipts are passed. A few unions adopt the system of membership cards. The books are in most case well kept. In short, "Strict Business" might be the motto of Indian trade-unionism.

A warning should at once be uttered against accepting this as a picture of the movement as a whole. It is correct of those unions of the upper-grade type, which are active, as nearly all the Bombay unions are at the moment. But in a few cases there, and in many elsewhere, when demands are temporarily satisfied, of further advance is found to be impossible, or a severe defeat has been suffered, stagnation sets in. The union may simply cease to work, or if individuals try to keep it going, members drop away. There is little or nothing, material or moral, to keep them together.

It is typical of social conditions generally that women's organisation hardly exists. Women are employed in large numbers, but as lower-grade workers. The Girni Kamgar Mahamandal has about twenty women members, and there are a few organised in Ahmedabad and Bengal (jute workers).

Interunion organisation is not of importance. The All India TUC contains a majority of the organised workers, though not of the unions. It and its subsidiary bodies, the provincial federations (in Bengal, Bombay and Madras, and in a nebulous form in the Central Provinces and the Punjab) exist mainly because they are the representative of the labour movement officially recognised by the central and (sometimes) by the provincial governments. Owing to the great distances and the general poverty of the movement, meetings can seldom be held between congresses, and the work done is mainly of a routine character. The members of the unions take little interest in its doings, and if they send delegates they do not usually receive reports.

There is only one body in the country which can in any way be compared to a trades council, the Central Labour

Board of Bombay.<sup>3</sup> And that is solely because of its constitution. It does not work as a trades council. It, or rather Jhabvala, organises separate unions, and sometimes conducts temperance propaganda. The former he does as provincial organiser for the TUC, the latter as secretary of the Central Labour Board.

There is commonly great solidarity among members of the same union, especially of the same grade, and strikes often result from this. But general class-consciousness is seldom to be noticed, except among lower-grade workers. It may be mentioned that the writer was present at a meeting of railway workers at the time of the agitation against the dispatch of Indian troops to China, and although the men in question have grounds for grievance against the Chinese, who are employed in the railway on the same work for higher pay, they brought forward a young Chinese worker and cheered him loudly as a demonstration of class solidarity.

The first May Day demonstration was held in Bombay this year and was attended mainly by municipal, mill and railway men, i.e. by lower and middle grade workers. (It is possible that the upper-grade men were kept away by their characteristic petty-bourgeois "respectability complexes".) It should be said that men of the lower grades, though generally unorganised, have some knowledge of what the labour movement means. Every worker in Bombay appears to know and respect Jhabvala, just as all Punjab workers know Miller.

A word should be said on the difficulties in labour organisation arising from differences of language, religion, &c. They are no doubt obstructions, but are not as important as is commonly thought in Europe, even in the

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3. The provincial federations of course tend to become in practice confined to Madras City, Calcutta, &c. And there is in Rangoon a general labour union with 10,000 members from different industries. It appears to be an unusually successful lower-grade organisation, and is probably in practice nearer to a genuine trades council than any other.

Punjab, where communal feeling is at its worst.<sup>4</sup> The chief difficulty of this nature is due to the relatively large differences in the wage-rates of various grades. It comes about through the greater effectiveness of upper-grade workers in pressing their claims, through the scarcity of persons with elementary or technical education and partly, no doubt, through a deliberate dividing policy.

The influence of "outsiders" as officials and leaders is a delicate question, and one of great importance. They are certainly necessary, especially for lower-grade unions, because of general illiteracy and the risk of victimisation. Only one such union, the Girni Kamgar Mahamandal, is carried on nominally without outside helpers. They tend to be eliminated for practical purposes by upper-grade unions, when the need for them disappears. But it is the writer's impression that the present "outsiders" as a whole deserve their bad name. Many enter the movement with interested motives, and though they may promote efficiency they are not to be replied upon. A notorious case is that of the BN Railway strike of this year. Even if, as is often the case, their motives are purely unselfish, they generally strengthen the sectarian and otherwise reactionary tendencies to which the movement is so prone. The Ahmedabad Union is perhaps the worst case. Here the

4. Efforts are occasionally made by employers to arouse communal passions, e.g. recently in the Bombay Port Trust Docks Staff Union, and previously in the NWR Union. Neither had any success. In fact only three cases have come to the writer's notice. Muslims have recently withdrawn almost en bloc from the Ahmedabad Weavers' Union. The Punjab Press Workers' Union is said to have collapsed last year from this cause, but it was in any case a feeble body. The Indian Seamen's Union, Bombay, has split nominally on this ground. Many of the saloon crews (Indian christians, mainly Goanese) have withdrawn to form a new union, as the old one also contains engine and deck hands (non-christians, mainly mohammedans). Communal feeling is present, but the split was promoted by the shipowners and traders, because the old union was opening its doors to the other crews, and was trying to extend its activities beyond the traditional limits of a mere employment bureau. The differences which often separate Indians from Anglo-Indians and Europeans are economic. The latter are invariably privileged, and often paid much higher rates.

president is an ordinary humanitarian, a member of a mill-owning family, and a conscious advocate of class-collaboration. Other officials, though they see something of its dangers, allow themselves to be completely led by Gandhi, whose policy is (in most respects, but not all) the same.

Bombay is blessed with disinterested and not unprogressive leaders. The Punjab is not so fortunate. The policy of the officially-recognised body is one of sheer servility. Bengal has officials of both kinds, and has for years been divided by quarrels which have more than once split unions, probably of purely personal origin. Many of the unions seem to be of the type described by Tom Johnston in his report on the jute industry. Three out of the four unions in that industry were bogus, and served merely to advertise their presidents. Madras has leaders who do not commit the usual error of abstaining from political activity, but their politics is not that of the working class. A Labour Party has been established which runs candidates in local elections. These make the grave mistake (in present circumstances) of opposing congress candidates. The party in fact seems to be entirely for electoral purposes, which are of very minor importance for labour at the present stage, and to have been organised in support of the reactionary remnants of the Home Rule League.

The acknowledged national leader of the trade-union movement is N. M. Joshi, the general secretary of the Trade Union Congress. With all respect it must be said that he is as much out of place in his position as, let us say, Sidney Webb would be as secretary of the Miners' Federation. He carries on his work with the same disinterested care that Webb would no doubt devote to the position suggested, and undoubtedly does the best that is possible along his lines. But his function is observation, research and the drafting of bills, not leadership.

Enough has now been said to give some idea of the movement as it stands. It is clear that the most important circumstances determining the present phase are the economic stability and the political deadness—the slow col-

lapse of bourgeois nationalism, and the continued paralysis of the petty-bourgeoisie.

India can expect on general grounds a prosperous industrial future. But Indian industry and economics generally are still very closely dependent upon Britain, which is becoming more and more a broken reed in these matters. And it is almost certain that the immediate political future of the British empire, and Asia generally, is a stormy one. It seems in any case safe to prophesy that the decades of peaceful progress, which many Indian leaders apparently on the example of Britain appear to expect, will not materialise. But it is even safer to predict that the present political quiescence in the country will not last for more than a year or two. The petty-bourgeoisie in the national movement are beginning to revolt against the bourgeois leadership, the last remnants of which are fast going over to the imperialist camp, in preparation for the statutory commission. It is to be expected, in view of the generally difficult position of British capitalism, that they will not be disappointed. Substantial concessions, probably "dominion status", &c will be offered, and obviously the whole of the bourgeois political school will accept them thankfully. All pretence of swarajist opposition will probably disappear fairly quickly. The mantle of nationalism will fall upon the shoulders of the petty-bourgeoisie, who will be forced to seek the assistance of the labour movement. (The example of Ireland must not be taken too seriously as there the civil war upset the "normal" course of events.) The emergence of the workers' and peasants' parties, of which four,<sup>5</sup> counting the Young India Society of the Punjab, now in existence, shows this tendency. They have already made

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5. In Bengal, Bombay, Rajputana (Ajmer) and the Punjab. The Punjab society was the first to organise a May-day demonstration in India, in Lahore in 1926. The Bombay Party has established itself as leader of the opposition in the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee. It organised the May-day demonstration this year, and is leading the present (end of August) strike of protest against the attempt to make the weavers in some mills work three looms instead of two.

some impression upon the labour movement. Owing partly to their influence the TUC in its last session carried a resolution in favour of industrial federalism. Unfortunately, a last-minute amendment by a railway representative was accepted, substituting "federations of unions" by "unions". Thus the resolution, which might have had some little effect, was rendered absolutely useless by the action of industry which stood most to gain, at the moment from its inaction.

In Bombay, in particular, the Workers' and Peasants' Party is carrying on propaganda for greater activity in the unions (some unions have now commenced monthly general meetings) and for the transformation of the Central Labour Board into a genuine trades council, &c. It is clear from what has been said above that they will have largely to depend upon what has here been called "lower-grade" labour, and the solution of the still unsolved problem of the organisations of the great mass of Indian labour probably lies with them.

There is a general realisation in political circles of the future importance of the labour movement, and though nothing is done, congress leaders speak more frequently than ever of labour work. At the Delhi congress, two leaders, Chamanlal and Lala Lajpat Rai, who had been out of touch with labour for some years, reappeared. The former rejoined the movement because, after three years of swarajist politics, he realises that bourgeois-nationalism is dead, and that the future conduct of the struggle will depend upon labour. The latter came for exactly the contrary reason, that he saw the future danger, for the bourgeoisie, and wished to check it in time.<sup>6</sup> The struggle between nationalism and imperialism for the possession of the labour movement has begun. When it has fully

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6. Cf his remarks in the *People* (Lahore, 20 March 1927) on the Delhi session of the Trade Union Congress: "It (the labour movement) is a tender plant which requires careful nursing—careful watering and protection from the rigours of the climate... What the Indian worker wants is not dogma, but help in organising, and in the redress of his grievances against the government and the employers. To feed him on doctrines...is to lead him astray."

opened out, the next great stage in the history of Indian labour will have commenced.

*Labour Monthly*, October 1927

Meerut Record, P 2075

## 28. THE SECOND BNR STRUGGLE

K. N. JOGLEKAR

The first strike of 1927 was not even completely over when we witnessed the beginning of a still bigger strike being forced upon the BNR workers. As was expected the railway authorities did not keep up their promise, not only that, but they actually started victimisation of the leaders (the rank-and-file active workers) who organised the first strike. The secretary of the Kharagpur Labour Union himself admits this. He says in a press communiqué, "shunting masters, guards, brakemen, labour secretary and others of Khurda Road have not been accepted for duty. The ex-strikers of Adra Bhaga, and several other places report nonadmission for duty. The agent's terms, regarding nonvictimisation, have been broken by departmental officers. Many Kharagpur ex-strikers, shop store-keepers, exchange operators, electrical engineers, are being victimised, taunted and transferred to out-stations and pressed to sign 'black lists' or threatened summary dismissals on noncompliance".

In June 1927 about 200 men were further reduced from the workshop in addition to some 43 strikers who were not reinstated after the settlement of March. The workshop men naturally grew excited over this and V. V. Giri and the union officials were forced to send representations to the agent but it came to no purpose... He (the agent) tried to repudiate the charge of victimisation and said that there was not enough work for men and therefore the

railway administration had decided to retrench the men. It was not because of any vindictive attitude towards the men for their having taken part in the February-March strike that several dismissals were effected. But the railway administration had decided to retrench 2000 men as a part of retrenchment plan. In August accordingly the administration put notices in Kharagpur Workshop, of their intention to reduce men and actually notices of discharge were served on men, individually, on 7 September. The retrenchment of 200 in June was the "weeding out by a gradual process" of inconvenient men. But in fact this weeding out was of those who were the most class-conscious workers and who had taken prominent part in the February strike. This fact became absolutely clear when actually on 7 September the authorities served notices of discharge on about 1700 men. It was found out from investigations that more than 90 per cent of these were active union members who had been prominent in February strike.

The government now came out boldly and declared that these reductions were being effected according to the recommendations of the Raven committee. On receipt of these notices on 7 September, the workers as usual came to shops on 8, but after going in resorted to "passive resistance." They remained absolutely peaceful and refused to do work until the notices were withdrawn. The same state of passive resistance continued for about two days and on 12 the administration declared a lock-out. Government gave out the reason for the lockout "that they did not want any untoward incident to happen in the workshop." But the real reason behind it was something different. This was revealed by a document that was quoted in the legislative assembly on 14 September 1927 when an adjournment motion was carried by the assembly condemning this lockout.\* This document re-

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\* The adjournment motion was moved by B. R. Das. Speaking on it N. M. Joshi said: "The proposal of retrenchment was a direct act of victimisation in consequence of the last strike.. The work should be done in the railway workshop instead of giving it to private contractors and retrenching railway workers. If there

vealed that the lockout was declared with a deliberate intention of breaking the spirit of the workers and smashing of their organisations. "The BNR authorities wanted to be independent of labour force" to quote the exact words of the document. It was quite obvious that the authorities of BNR were burning with a spirit of revenge. To their annoyance the men had shown great solidarity and spirit of resistance... In spite of this big attack on the workers Giri and the union officials remained quite unmoved just the same as in the February strike. Not only that but they even did not approve of the move of passive resistance that the workers resorted to on their own initiative. They did not stop at this but they (V. V. Giri and W. R. Naidu) actually denounced this action of workers in a public meeting held on 10 September, i.e. two days prior to the declaration of the lockout. In fact by this denunciation Giri encouraged and helped the administration in their desire to declare a lockout to bring the workers into submission. This is what the union manifesto issued on 14 September says, "The secretary of the Labour Union emphatically denies that the labour leaders are approving and definitely encouraging the attitude of passive resistance offered by the workers of the shops. The step they (the workers) took was entirely on their own responsibility. Giri, the president, as well as Naidu, the secretary of the Kharagpur Labour Union, denounced it at a public meeting held on 10th instant at Kharagpur." The manifesto further adds "Naidu definitely stated that he was neither for a strike nor for any sort of passive resistance but he wanted to carry on the agitation by all constitutional means." So now this puts the matter quite clearly. The

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was a lockout and a strike, the responsibility for these lay on the railway authorities." George Rainy replying to the motion on behalf of the government attempted to justify the reduction in staff on the grounds of economy and admitted that some 1000 men were affected. He said the government could not make the BN Railway refrain from discharging the men, but promised in future reductions the gradual absorption in the vacancies. The motion was carried by 44 votes against 3. —Cf *Indian Quarterly Review*, 1927, Vol 2, pp 246-48.

union authorities did not care so much for the interests of the 2000 workers that were sacked... Not only that they did not care as to what happened to the 2000 workers to be retrenched, but from the statement issued by Naidu on 20 September it is revealed that the union officials actually consented to the retrenchment of these men. This is what Naidu says in the statement: He fully realised that "on account of financial stringency of the company some retrenchment might be necessary"... However in spite of this worthless leadership the men remained firm, and indeed the workers on all parts of the railways were so fully in sympathy with the Kharagpur workers that as early as 23 September there were definite indications of a possibility of general strike on the whole Bengal Nagpur Railway and Giri was so very frightened with this prospect that he hastened to telegraph to the government of India, the railway board and the managing director of the BN Railway Company in London, praying for the cancellation of the retrenchment order.

Meanwhile on 14 September, on the hearing of a lock-out declared by the railway administration, a motion of adjournment was moved and carried by majority in the legislative assembly. The lockout and the suffering of the workers was however a mere plea of the national bourgeoisie to express their disapproval of the Raven committee proposals. In the case of this motion, just the same as that of 18 February 1927, the object of the assembly members—the representatives of the Indian bourgeoisie—was not so much the protection of the workers' interest as the expression of the discontent and opposition to the government policy of giving preference to British trading and capitalist interest. The object of the recommendations of the Raven committee was, according to the government professions, "to introduce automatic machinery of production, to increase the output and decrease the labour cost" But it transpired in the course of the debate on the adjournment motion, that the government's real intentions were to reduce the work in the railway workshops and to give contracts for the same to private and foreign contractors... The national bourgeoisie resented that govern-

ment was not giving encouragement to their Indian industrial concerns. So the sole point of their opposition was that they, the Indian bourgeoisie, were being deprived of the opportunities of exploiting the Indian workers. However that may be, but the motion, to the surprise of many and unlike the previous motion of 18 February, was passed by majority. And though it actually produced no immediate effect on the BN Railway strike situation, still it gave some fillip to Giri, Joshi & co. They were able to some extent to mislead some of the workers and Giri continued his prayers to the agent and the railway board to give him an opportunity to compromise the strike.

Meanwhile the men remained firm and continued their efforts to offer a united front to the railway administration. Under pressure from the rank-and-file the union was forced to call a meeting of the central council of the union. The central council met on 26 September and decided to prepare for a general strike on the whole BN Railway line and commanded Giri to tour on the line for the purpose. But according to the report of the secretary of the All India Railwaymen's Federation, who happened to be at Kharagpur and was keenly watching the developments there, Giri did not obey the orders of the central council of the union...

The adjournment motion of the assembly did one important service to the Indian railwaymen. It exposed the government intentions of rationalisation, and attracted and centralised the attention of all-India railwaymen to the danger of the retrenchment that was looming ahead. Therefore the strike of BN Railway received considerable sympathy from all railwaymen in India and the All-India Railwaymen's Federation for the first time in its history took active part in actually fighting the struggle of the workers and helping them to organise and try to carry it to a successful conclusion...

When by the first week of October the government of India found that there was no sign of the strike collapsing, it came forth on 6 October with a statement of the government policy regarding the strike. They completely upheld the action of the agent of the BN Railway Com-

pany. This statement was issued in consultation with the BN Railway agent and after upholding the agent's action the communique announced the intentions of the government and the agent of the BNR Company to appoint a committee of two officers, one representing the government of India and the other representing the BN Railway agent, to examine the list of charges and go into the allegations of unfair treatment and victimisation. However the communique made it clear that the government were not prepared to accede to the request of Giri and Joshi to refer the matter of the necessity of retrenchment to the inquiry. This is what the communique actually says, "The government of India are unable to accede to the request made for an inquiry into the necessity of reduction of the labour force at Kharagpur or a postponement of a reduction. They could not therefore ask the agent to cancel the notices of discharge" ... After this communique was issued the agent opened the workshop on 12 October but the men were not duped by his device. They went in and resorted to passive resistance as before and again the workshops had to be closed...

On 29 October 1927 the All-India Railwaymen's Federation met at Kharagpur in a special convention. It held its sitting for two days and after full consideration and heated debate decided by an overwhelming majority to prepare for an all-India railwaymen's strike, if within a week the irreducible minimum demands of the BN Railway Union were not granted. This resolution was adopted in the face of the opposition of Giri, Joshi and their followers. But, before this resolution of the All-India Railwaymen's Federation could be put into operation, Giri called a meeting of the central council of the BN Railway Indian Labour Union and modified considerably the original demands of the strikers... The minimum terms were the following: (1) Reinstatement of those retrenched men and women who have not accepted the settlement pending the government committee's decision. (2) Right for the payment of wages for the lockout period. (3) The union representatives to be on the inquiry committee.

On these terms Giri straightway began negotiations with

the agent and the railway board and hurriedly went to Delhi accompanied by N. M. Joshi to induce the railway board to bring pressure on the agent of the BN Railway to grant these minimum demands...

On 5 November Giri, Joshi and Chamanlal had an interview with Sir George Rainy and Sir Clement Hindley, the chief commissioner of railways. They offered to the railway board to call off the strike on the grant of the lockout wages to the workers, but the railway board only consented "to grant subsistence allowance as a mark of grace" for the lockout period on condition that the men resumed work unconditionally, worked satisfactorily for two months and accepted this as a final settlement of dispute. But these terms were turned down by the men when Giri came down to Kharagpur to placate them. The acceptance of these terms, the men said, would be virtually a surrender. The men were required according to these terms to resume work unconditionally and the socalled grant of subsistence allowance was only a deception... By December 1927 the rumblings of strike on SIR had already started, therefore the railway board hastened to end the BN Railway strike so as to remove any chance of a combined action.

The government accordingly agreed to recommend to the BN Railway agent to give full lockout wages to the Kharagpur men and in return the union under Giri's leadership agreed to call off the strike unconditionally and accept the retrenchment of 2000 men. The government issued a communique on 6 December 1927 enumerating these terms and on 8 December 1927 the union called off the strike and after a prolonged strike of more than three months the men, exhausted and weakened, reluctantly resumed work.

Thus ended the long-drawn-out fight of the workers against the first operation of the retrenchment policy of the government.

## 29. ALL-INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS

The All-India Trade Union Congress held its eighth annual session at Kanpur in the last week of November 1927. Out of fifty-seven affiliated trade unions, with a total membership of 125,000, only twenty-seven were represented at the congress by about 100 delegates.

In his presidential speech, Chamanlal advocated the collection of a large central fund of ten lakh (£ 75,000) for the development of trade-union organisation. On the Simon commission, he called for the withdrawal of the British labour members and declared that it was necessary to warn the British Labour Party that "their party as a whole had betrayed the confidence we had placed in it".

The report for the year shows the affiliation of two new unions. Many more had been formed during the year, but by a resolution recently adopted no trade union can affiliate until it has been in existence for more than a year. By government orders, two of the postmen's unions had withdrawn from the congress and others were likely to follow. Even the Cordite Factory Union in Madras presidency had been told by the government that it should withdraw from the congress if it hopes to get recognition, although its workers are not under government rules. Of the 57 affiliated unions, 13 were railway unions, 11 textile, 10 general labour, 7 transport (other than rail), and 4 seamen's unions.

No meeting of the executive council of the TUC had been held during the year, nor was any strike authorised by it but as the report says, "there occurred some strikes and lockouts in which the officials of the congress had to interest themselves". By issue of circular to the executive council members it had been decided to send delegates to the session of the IFTU at Paris in August 1927.

The proceedings of the congress showed the presence of an active leftwing group, mainly representatives of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, who succeeded in getting discussed the Simon commission, the threat of war to the USSR, the League against Imperialism and Colonial Oppres-

sion, etc. The influence of the delegates from the British Trades Union Congress, Purcell and Hallsworth, was actively exerted on the side of the right wing and they obtained the support even of Chamanlal. The Purcell-Chamanlal group, together with Joshi, the general secretary, opposed the resolutions on the League against Imperialism, on war danger and on the Pan-Pacific conference, but they failed to secure a vote in support of the IFTU, the congress reaffirming its decision to press for unity between the IFTU and RILU.

Besides resolutions dealing with general labour demands, housing, unemployment, factory inspection and the special grievances of textile workers, railway workers, miners, seamen, &c the following resolutions were also passed.

#### ROYAL COMMISSION ON REFORMS

(a) This congress realising that in as much as the appointment of the statutory commission on reforms violates the principle of selfdetermination for India and in as much as the commission as at present constituted is, in its opinion, but an attempt to find ways and means to perpetuate the imperialistic domination of Great Britain over India, declares that the statutory commission should be boycotted and requests the Parliamentary Labour Party to withdraw its two labour representatives from the commission

(b) Further, the congress declares that meanwhile a subcommittee should draw up a labour constitution for the future government of India which should be presented to the executive council and to the working class in the country and that P. Spratt should be the convener.

#### COUNCIL OF ACTION

This congress, realising the urgency of organising a mass movement of the workers and peasants of India in order to extricate them from their present condition of abject poverty, hereby resolves to appoint a council of action consisting of representatives from each province.

The council of action will from its appointment undertake the work of:

- (1) Organisation of peasants and workers in cooperation with the existing unions.
- (2) Propaganda for the assertion of the rights of workers and peasants.
- (3) The setting up of a publicity bureau and a central press.
- (4) The collection of funds for the abovementioned objects.
- (5) Chamanlal shall act as president and S. H. Jhabvala as secretary of the council of action.
- (6) The council will be subject to control by the executive council and must present the executive council with a program of the work to be done and from time to time a monthly report of its activities.

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION UNITY

This congress deplores the failure of the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee and urges that further efforts be made to bring about unity between the IFTU and RILU.

#### PROTEST AGAINST IMPERIALISM

This congress reaffirms that it looks upon imperialism as a form of capitalist class government intended to facilitate and perpetuate the exploitation and slavery of all workers, both white and coloured, in the interests of the capitalist class, and declares that the only safeguard against exploitation lies in the creation by the working class of a corresponding measure of class unity, solidarity and consciousness.

This congress therefore expresses its willingness and desire to bring about the greatest possible solidarity and coordinated activity on the part of the trade unions throughout the world and oppose imperialism.

#### SOVIET ANNIVERSARY

This congress congratulates the USSR on having attained the tenth anniversary of the first workers' republic in spite of imperialist intervention to break it.

## CHINA

This congress reaffirms its wholehearted approval of the magnificent advance made by the people of China towards the attainment of national freedom and in pursuit of the principle of selfdetermination. The congress warmly appreciates the valuable work that has been done by the trade unions and the peasants' organisations which, under the leadership of Kuomintang, have frustrated the aggressive designs of the united imperialistic powers. The congress, while pledging its full support to the movement of liberation in China, expresses its firm conviction that the cause of Indian nationalism and the struggle of the working classes against exploitation should profit from the example of solidarity of the nationalist movement and the workers, and the workers' and peasants' organisations as set by China.

This congress vehemently protest against the action of the Indian government in furthering the aims of imperialism by sending Indian troops to China, and calls upon the government of India to recall all such troops.

*Labour Monthly*  
April 1928

### 30. THE RILU TO THE EIGHTH ALL INDIA CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS

The executive bureau of the RILU, on behalf of the revolutionary trade-union movement of all countries, sends cordial and fraternal greetings to the eighth trade union congress and the whole working class of India and wishes for success in the struggle against the alien and native oppressors.

The trade-union movement in India is rapidly developing, the class-consciousness of the wide proletarian masses

is growing as well as the proletarian solidarity in the economic and political struggle against the oppressors. There are tremendous tasks confronting the working class of India. The struggle against imperialism and colonial oppression begun by the workers and peasants in the USSR, China, Indonesia can be successfully accomplished only by the efforts of the working class throughout the world and particularly of the proletariat in the colonial countries. The role of the Indian proletariat in this struggle must be particularly great.

In this struggle against the alien oppressors and the national exploitors the working class of India and the trade unions must always count on the aid of the Red International of Labour Unions and its sections. This constitutes the very distinction between the RILU and the reformist Amsterdam international which is permeated with the imperialist spirit, whilst the former has at all times supported the struggle of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples for independence.

There was particularly clearly revealed the distinction between the imperialist policy of the Amsterdam International and the revolutionary policy of the RILU in the course of the bitter struggle of the Chinese proletariat against imperialism and the internal counterrevolution. Whilst the RILU did all in its power to help the Chinese revolution, the Amsterdam International did not lift a finger to help the Chinese proletariat in its hard struggle. The denial of aid to the Chinese workers and peasants was tantamount to helping the world imperialists and the Chinese counterrevolution.

The executive bureau of the RILU is profoundly convinced that the trade unions of India will be able to determine who are the enemies and who are the friends of the exploited classes and oppressed peoples and that the working class of India will march shoulder to shoulder with those who have placed upon their banner the unity of the world trade-union movement, the overthrow of the imperialist domination and the independence of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples.

Long Live the Working Class of India!  
Long Live the Unity of the World Trade-union Movement!

Moscow, 24 November 1927.

*International Press Correspondence*

Vol 7, No 68, 1 December 1927

(It was probably intercepted by the police and never delivered. It is not mentioned in the report of the session)

### 31. THE TUC LEFT

When the 8th session of the TUC met in Kanpur, it was found that the policy on which the congress is at present run needed a change and higher outlook. A few persons were found to agree on a set of principles and 'tactics', which later on found expression in resolutions and amendments to the official policy of the TUC. An informal gathering of those persons decided to lay out a plan of a cohesive group and plan for future work in order to foster real trade-union activity amongst the workers.

#### WORK IN THE KANPUR SESSION

We had to move several amendments to the report of the general secretary. While mentioning strikes, only names of the rightwingers were brought in with special care. In opposition we enunciated the policy of omitting the names of individuals as far as possible and giving credit of success to union concerned. In the paras greeting the British delegates and condemning the persecution of labour organisers, we moved the inclusion of the names of P. Spratt and Fazl Ilahi Hussain convicted in Peshawar to five years RI. In the para of recently started labour organs only the *Indian Labour Review* of Vack was

mentioned. We amended to include the *Kranti* (Bombay), *Kirti, Mehnatkash* (Punjab) and *Ganavani* (Bengal).

### RESOLUTIONS

A resolution expressing sympathy with aims and objects, of the League against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression was suggested by Sethi (Jamshedpur), but was not allowed. The official party supported by Purcell opposed it on the alleged ground that the League was an offshoot of the 3rd International. We exposed the somersaults of Purcell and the capitalist character of the 2nd International. Purcell's attitude in 1925 was brought to light from quotations from his articles in the *Labour Monthly* on international unity.

Reaffirming last year's resolutions.

Resolution on Imperialism; (a bit changed) resolution on China.

Resolution on international unity, (deplored the failure of the Anglo-Russian Union Committee.)

A resolution of ours (adopted unanimously) congratulated the USSR on its 10th anniversary.

A resolution condemning the encirclement of the USSR by the imperialist states and provocation to war was rejected by the president. So also one expressing sympathy for the work of the Pan-Pacific conference of Canton.

A resolution of ours (adopted) condemned the refusal of passport to Saklatwala.

### OFFICES

Office (The XX) of the organising secretary of the council of action was got for Jhabvala, and that of assistant secretary for Dange.

The council of action and the committee to draft a constitution includes the following: P. Spratt, S. H. Jhabvala, S. A. Dange.

An informal meeting held at Goweltoli, Kanpur, on 29 November 1927, decided to concentrate mainly on building up new and penetrating the existing unions. The following attended the informal gathering, and discussion to

evolve a plan of systematic trade-union work: *Bombay*: (1) Dange, (2) Mirajkar, (3) Ghate, (4) Joglekar; *Lahore*: (1) Ferozuddin, (2) Majid Ali, (3) Gauhar Rahaman, (4) Bhag Singh, (5) Sohan Singh; *Bengal*: (1) Muzaffar Ahmad, (2) Dharanikant Goswami, (3) Basak, (4) Kidarnath Roy, (5) Aftab Ali. Total: 14.

The others who could not attend but worked with us in the session are not mentioned in the above list. On their former consent being taken, a fresh list will be issued for the information of members.

Wadekar Building  
Girgaon, Bombay 4.

Yours fraternally,  
*Prov. Secretary*

Meerut Record  
P 1878 (I) (c)

## X. Simon Commission Boycott

### 32. MANIFESTO ISSUED BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' PARTY OF BOMBAY ON THE ROYAL COMMISSION

The Workers' and Peasants' Party as the political representative of millions of exploited masses of India unreservedly stands for a universal and really effective boycott of the royal commission. Besides cooperating with the other political parties, Congress and non-Congress, in organising a concrete method of boycott it will utilise all its resources and influence amongst trade unions and other mass organisations in the country to carry out the said boycott in more concrete and effective terms than mere abstinence from tendering evidences before the royal commission or partaking in any formal or informal gatherings where the members of the royal commission might possibly attend with a view to gauge public opinion in any direct or indirect form.

The Workers' and Peasants' Party has no illusion about the royal commission and reiterates its conviction that not through such commissions but only by developing and bringing into action the basic force of the nation, the dynamic action of organised workers and peasants, can alone be productive of any really valuable and vital political results. It therefore proposes to call on the organised and unorganised toiling masses of this land to demonstrate

in unambiguous and unmistakable terms (mass action including strikes and demonstrations) their active indifference towards such commissions intended to sidetrack the attention of the Indian people.

Further the party challenges the very right of British imperialism to sit in judgement over the political destiny of this land and emphatically condemns the shortsighted policy and compromising tendencies of other political groups who quibble over the personnel of the commission and thereby fundamentally forsake the principle of self-determination—the inherent right of every nation.

S. S. MIRAJKAR  
*Secretary*

Meerut Record  
P 1348(49)

### 33. THE ROLE OF THE BOURGEOISIE IN THE NATIONAL REVOLUTION

The dominating topic of Indian politics at the present moment is the royal commission of constitutional reform which is due to be set up next year. Speculation and canvassing are rampant as regards the composition of the commission. The pastime of constitution-making is indulged in on all sides. India has served her apprenticeship. The question is how far will she be promoted on the scale of selfgovernment within the empire?

Two years ago British imperialism, speaking through Birkenhead, told the Indian nationalist bourgeoisie that the condition sine quo non for a further constitutional progress was the good behaviour on the part of the latter. Since then Indian bourgeois nationalist politics have been dominated by one anxiety—to prove that the condition demanded

by imperialism has been fulfilled. In spite of the ever subsiding stage thunder of swarajist parliamentary obstruction, the Indian bourgeoisie have satisfied their British task-masters. They have waited patiently till the maximum period of apprenticeship was over; they have refused to be contaminated with the least of revolutionary tendencies; they have cooperated, directly or indirectly, with the satanic "bureaucracy" to help its tide over the most critical moments; and they have categorically committed themselves to eternal subordination to British imperialism (self-government within the empire).

In spite of these facts, the National Congress under swarajist domination kept up a show of recalcitrance. Finally, this has got to end; and it is going to end in the most spectacularly unexpected way. The National Congress, in the coming annual session, is going to declare peace with British imperialism; and remarkably enough this peace-making will take place under the direction of the die-hard gandhist, Ansari. This action of Ansari is, however, not so incongruous with his cult as it appears. On the contrary, it is the logical outcome of the cult of gandhism. The highest ideal of pacifism is peace. Gandhism advised the Indian people not to fight, but to suffer for freedom. If you do not fight British imperialism, you must make peace with it.

There is another side to the declaration of Ansari that as the president he will call upon the National Congress to abandon the policy of parliamentary obstruction. Gandhism is petty-bourgeois intellectualism. Defending and furthering, for all practical purposes, the interests of the land-owning and capitalist class, the Congress (Swaraj) Party draws its strength from the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia. The Swaraj Party whole-heartedly stuck to the bankrupt tactics of parliamentary obstruction in order to satisfy the restlessness of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia. Now one of the stalwarts of gandhism comes forward to declare that the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia no longer insist upon these tactics for they have become detrimental to capitalist interests. Ansari has proved that petty-bourgeois reaction

(gandhism), just as the petty-bourgeois radicalism of the Swaraj Party, only serves the interests of capitalism.

The hands of the swarajist politicians are forced. But they do not relish this freedom very much. On the eve of his departure for England to negotiate about the composition of the royal commission Motilal Nehru culminated against Ansari's declaration. Strange logic of a bourgeois politician! Don't call a spade a spade. But the indignation of the congress politicians is not the sentiment of the class they represent; it reflects their personal interests. Should the Congress come out in favour of participation in the government, the ground would be cut under the feet of the swarajist politicians. Their "holier than thou" position would become ridiculous. Their political career would come to an end. On the other hand, such a declaration by the National Congress is essential to enable them to comply completely with the conditions that Birkenhead put forward as a preliminary to further constitutional progress.

At this juncture it is necessary to estimate the role of the bourgeoisie in the national revolution. The bourgeoisie are not only withdrawing themselves from the national revolution; the withdrawal is but a prelude to a definite stand against the national revolution together with British imperialism. This is the implication of the policy of cooperation which the bourgeois nationalists have accepted for all practical purposes. It is necessary to know the reasons which contributed to this deviation on the part of the nationalist bourgeoisie.

So long as imperialist domination was based upon the policy of obstructing the capitalist development of the country, the native bourgeoisie was the driving force of the nationalist movement. The nationalist movement, during the last five years, has been greatly influenced by the changing relations between imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie. Successive measures taken to promote capitalist development of the country have coincided with a steady decline in the political demands of bourgeois nationalism. One stratum of the bourgeoisie followed another into co-operation with imperialism on the basis of the latter's

hegemony in proportion as concessions to native capitalism were made. Finally, the bourgeois-nationalist movement is split up into half a dozen parties all of which are opposed to a revolutionary struggle against imperialism. The Indian nationalist movement as representing the bourgeoisie and led by the ideological spokesmen of native capitalism, is committed to the program of "dominion status". All that the Indian bourgeoisie desires is "partnership" in the empire.

As a matter of fact the Indian bourgeoisie never undertook anything but a "constitutional" struggle against imperialism. Even when they were positively suppressed by imperialism, they did not advocate a revolutionary struggle for national freedom. The main planks in the platform of the National Congress was constitutional reform, fiscal autonomy and protection for the indigenous industries. In every critical movement the bourgeoisie, directly or indirectly, rallied on the side of imperialism as against the danger of revolution (in 1908, in 1916 and in 1920). Finally, the abandoning of the resented and ruinous policy of free trade in favour of the principle of protection has cleared the ground for the collaboration between imperialism and the nationalist bourgeoisie.

There are historical reasons for the remarkably non-revolutionary character of the Indian bourgeoisie. The growth of the Indian bourgeoisie has been such that they are bound, on the one hand, with reactionary feudal economy and, on the other, with imperialist trade and finance. Therefore, without hurting their own class interest they cannot lead a revolutionary struggle for the destruction of native reaction and foreign imperialism, which is the program of national revolution (overthrow of imperialist domination) cannot be a bourgeois revolution.

The British conquest of India has essentially the significance of bourgeois revolution (Marx). Now, the unaccomplished part of the bourgeois revolution takes place in India also under the protection of British imperialism, but in this period of capitalist decline, its significance is counterrevolutionary. For example certain juridical

measures of land reform as regards the tenancy rights are introduced in India not on the initiative of the native bourgeoisie; it is done by imperialism, often in the face of bourgeois-nationalist opposition. To deal with the dangerous situation created by the peasant revolt in the postwar years the British government introduced tenancy reforms in the provinces where the revolt was the most acute. In the province of Bengal the reform could not be carried because of the unanimous nationalist (bourgeois) opposition. It is again imperialism that is approaching (cautiously and superficially) the agrarian problem as an indispensable precondition for the capitalist development of the country. The nationalist bourgeoisie has never tackled the problem. As a matter of fact, they are stout defenders of the present system of landownership. In the revolutionary period of 1921-22, the National Congress led by Gandhi openly supported (Bardoli resolution) the landlords in the face of the countrywide peasant revolt. The Swaraj Party repeatedly reassured the landowning classes that it was opposed to any attack upon their position and lauded them as the pillars of Indian culture.

The bourgeoisie in a colonial country becomes a revolutionary factor in so far as it initiates and leads the struggle for the creation of a condition for economic progress obstructed by imperialist domination. By adopting the policy of promoting the capitalist development of India British imperialism deprives the nationalist bourgeoisie of its revolutionary role. Under the present conditions the native bourgeoisie grows not as an enemy of imperialism; it becomes its ally—junior partner, protege. Exploitation of human labour is the basic condition of capitalist development. The new economic policy of British imperialism in India sharpens the class differentiation and ripens the class struggle in the face of which nationalist struggle based upon capitalist antagonism loses its importance. The policy of imperialism in this period of capitalist decline does not cut across the general interests of the bourgeoisie in the advanced colonial countries like India. The antagonisms between the two ceases to be that between the oppressor

and oppressed; it approximates the "normal" antagonism inherent in the capitalist system. On the other hand, common interests and the common fear of revolution draw them together ever closer in a united front in the class struggle—to exploit and oppress the working class.

Indian bourgeoisie does not outgrow the state of absolute colonial suppression as a result of its struggle against imperialism. The process of the gradual "decolonisation" of India is produced by two different factors, namely (1) post-war crisis of capitalism and (2) the revolutionary awakening of the Indian masses. In order to stabilise its economic basis and strengthen its position in India, British imperialism is obliged to adopt a policy which cannot be put into practice without making certain concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie. These concessions are not conquered by the Indian nationalist bourgeoisie. They are gifts (reluctant, but obligatory) of imperialism. Therefore, the process of "decolonisation" is parallel to the process of "derevolutionisation" of the Indian bourgeoisie.

The influence of the imperialist war and the Russian revolution broadened the social basis of the Indian nationalist movement. It outgrew the narrow limits of the bourgeois and intellectual professional classes. It assumed a mass character and mass form. For the first time in its history, in spite of the reactionary bourgeois leadership that still dominated it, it objectively placed before itself the task of overthrowing imperialist domination and of liquidating the social backwardness of the country resulting from its. The bourgeoisie had not contributed to that revolutionisation of the nationalist movement. They even did not place themselves at its head post-factum. On the contrary, as soon as the nationalist movement assumed a revolutionary mass character, the big bourgeoisie turned against it and co-operated with imperialism in fighting it. The leadership of the newly-revolutionised nationalist movement fell upon the weak and unwilling petty bourgeoisie which debilitated the movement by imposing upon it a reactionary ideology and reformist program. That revolutionary development of the nationalist movement, which the big bourgeoisie opposed

and the petty bourgeoisie dissipated, was the internal factor that caused (rather expedited) the change of the imperialist policy. Therefore the position yielded by imperialism is a conquest of the masses usurped by the bourgeoisie, as has always been the case in bourgeois revolutions.

Imperialism is obliged to bribe the Indian bourgeoisie not only to broaden its base in India, not only as the corollary to the policy of increasing colonial plunder by the introduction of changed methods and forms of exploitation to meet the changed world conditions. The collaboration of the Indian bourgeoisie is necessary for the defence of the position of British imperialism in the entire east and in case of the projected war against the USSR.

India cannot be made the military base of British imperialism in the east unless complete support of the native bourgeoisie is assured. Should the Indian bourgeoisie be kept in the prewar condition of absolute colonial suppression, they would look upon the USSR as an agency of deliverance, as the Chinese bourgeoisie did for a time. In that case they would not help imperialism to combat the penetration into the masses of the influence of the Russian and Chinese revolutions. But the Indian bourgeoisie 'with a stake in the country', with a perspective of selfaggrandisement under the protection of imperialism as is the case now, are as afraid of the "bolshevik menace" as their imperialist patrons.

All these factors taken together determine the character of the Indian nationalist bourgeoisie. It is no longer a revolutionary force. Not only from the point of view of the internal conditions of India; but from the point of view of the present world conditions also the Indian bourgeoisie is rallied on the side of counterrevolution. It cannot and does not lead or participate in the struggle for national freedom (completely outside the British empire), Indian national revolution has passed its bourgeois stage. It must still realise a program which, objectively and historically, is no longer a bourgeois revolution, because it can and will succeed only by breaking the bounds of capitalist society.

The readjustment of the relation between British imperialism and Indian bourgeoisie, however, cannot be without hitches. Imperialism naturally seeks to buy the collaboration of the Indian bourgeoisie for the least possible price. The Indian bourgeoisie, on the other hand, desire to have more economic advantages and political rights. Consequently, on the basis of a united front against revolution, there goes on a parliamentary struggle between the two. Then the contradictory interests of the different sections of the bourgeoisie influence the situation. For example, the interests of the industrial and trading bourgeoisie clash on the policy of protection. While the financial groups of Bombay are not altogether opposed to the scheme of a reserve bank (of issue) with share-capital, the manufacturing and trading interests unitedly join with the professional classes in their demand that the reserve bank should be a state bank. Owing to the unevenness of the level of its development, and owing to the inner contradictions of capitalism, the Indian bourgeoisie as a class cannot always collaborate with imperialism on all questions. Now one or more sections support or agree with the imperialist policy and other are in the opposition (parliamentary); and then, vice versa.

Taking advantage of the conflict of sectional interests imperialism splits the nationalist bourgeoisie politically, (thus) rendering their parliamentary opposition ineffective. The entire energy of the bourgeoisie is at present concentrated to secure further constitutional reforms which will enable them to carry on the parliamentary struggle for power more effectively. Imperialism, of course, will not yield the monopoly of state-power; therefore, on the background of ever closer agreement on the basic economic issues, there will always be a parliamentary struggle. Without overestimating it and always knowing its superficial character, this parliamentary struggle should be used for the development of the revolution. In the next stage of the national revolution the role of the bourgeoisie will be limited to this.

*Masses of India*

Vol 3, No 11, November 1927

### 34. THE SIMON COMMISSION

#### SHAPURJI SAKLATVALA

Behind this innocent looking commission of inquiry lies a great struggle in the last capitalist empire of the world. In the readjustment of postwar Europe, Great Britain had to play a prominent part. She had to talk of new democracies, of the rights of minorities, of the ignominy of conquests, of the liberties of common people, of the war guilt of monarchs, statesmen and warlords of other nations. She saw the world challenge coming on, and the uneasy conscience and the mental cunning of her politicians were quick enough to see the spectre of India, and on a lesser scale of Ireland and Egypt.

#### THE MONTAGU SCHEME

British imperialist felt the shame of the last surviving empire. A quick transformation was felt to be an imperative need. The disfranchised masses at home were to be enrolled in parliamentary registers; the dominions of Canada, Australia and New Zealand could be granted unlimited freedom without any danger to the mother country, or to the capitalist structure of British finance. South Africa, with her Dutch nationalists, was a somewhat different proposition, but Botha and Smuts—once the unbeatable enemies of the British imperialists—had suddenly become saviours of the British empire. Ireland was still more difficult, but with her scanty population and nearness to British naval bases and military barracks, a prescription of black-and-tan terrorism was considered safe. Egypt was muzzled and doped by the trickery of a Milner commission. The British empire was all but ready to assume the cloak of a voluntary commonwealth of free states under which to escape the shame and challenge of the outside world, but—but there was India.

Between India and England, there were none of the mutual, natural and economic ties of the dominions. Indian nationalists were not a mere handful like the Boers, Irish

and Egyptians, nor was India so conveniently near by. Something required to be designed, and imperialist minds set a thinking. The gentleman who afterwards became part author of the Montagu scheme wrote to his coadjutors in England in a confidential memorandum, which leaked out, that a plan had been carefully prepared which would have to be put through even though it would necessitate the spilling of blood. (This prophecy was written before the Amritsar debacle and the moplah massacre.) The essence of this scheme was that, while the governing power was to hold absolute power of dictation and exploitation backed up by armaments, the obedience of the people was thenceforward to be exacted in a democratic form, and to be recorded in parliamentary language.

Indian bourgeois politicians were in a strange plight. They wanted freedom, but with protective tariff reforms that may raise the price to the consumers for the benefit of the Indian manufacturers. They wanted liberty, but full and rigorous control over their factory labour. They were eager to secure economic prosperity, but the peasantry was to respect the rights of the landlords (zamindars). Thus they came to "discuss freedom" with Lloyd George and company in England. That was not all. Annie Besant had come over as a friend of Indian freedom, and protector of her country's imperialism, having as her faithful ally and admirer, even then, George Lansbury, and her indefatigable lieutenant, Graham Pole.

#### "LABOUR" FRIENDS OF INDIA

The Indian deputation on several occasions, after consulting among themselves and with several Indian friends in London, would come to the conclusion that the imperialist offer was not worth considering. Then the spectre of a mass revolution in India, or a black-and-tan terror against them, would unnerve them, and would send them into the bosom of "the friends of India" in the British labour circles. Their advice then, as now, would be "accept what you get, learn the art of building up democratic progress;

above all British labour will be with you to grant you genuine freedom based on selfdetermination". Thus the Indian mind was pretty well made up, the Indian congress machinery in London was taken away from the liberal party and placed in the hands of labour and ILP "friends of India".

Before the final acceptance of the scheme and its recommendations in India, some sort of a "public Indian" acceptance in London was considered necessary for psychological effect. A meeting was held in Essex Hall in London of Indians-cum-labour and other radical friends of India. I definitely moved an amendment to let the British rulers proceed with their camouflage scheme, for Indians to keep away from it; to organise their own masses, and to formulate their own plans of freedom. I explained to the meeting that by such a process India would gain her liberty within ten years (the specified time of the Montagu bill) and that by the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme India would gradually lose more and more to imperial demands. I was denounced by labour "friends of India", and the Indian official deputation asked me not to be so idealistic, impracticable, rash and pessimistic, and to withdraw my amendment, I did not do so and the amendment was heavily defeated. It is clear today that my thought was not defeated.

Within a very short time Indian leaders discovered the true imperialist nature of their democratic councils. The subsequent struggle, with the constant subconscious dread of the struggle of the masses against the domination of the landlords and manufacturers, introduced into the Indian political arena the same mentality and atmosphere as exists with the leadership of the social-democrats of Germany and France, and the Labour Party of Great Britain. They desire power, they profess a sincere zeal for mass welfare when they become the dominant factor, but they simultaneously promise complete safety and safeguards to capitalism, and the power of wealth over individual liberty.

## REFORMING THE "REFORMS"

This leaves the Indian political machinery in a divided mind, the same as with the Labour Party in Britain and the socialist parties in Germany and France. The imperialists and reactionary capitalist nationalists have not been slow to take advantage of it. In Germany and France the militarist nationalists have destroyed the rights of the masses through the impotent socialists, and in Great Britain Baldwin's sweeping attack on the masses in succeeding admirably on account of the impotence of the British Labour Party, which supports old-world militancy in favour of capitalist rights and privileges and condemns and dreads the very name of militancy in workingclass struggle.

Surrounded by such a favourable atmosphere, encouraged by uniform labour support in all acts of imperialism, state militarism and national capitalism, Baldwin and Birkenhead see a splendid opportunity of tackling India. Taking advantage of India's frequently expressed dissatisfaction with the original "reforms", Baldwin and Birkenhead, MacDonald and Lansbury, all decide that the further tightening of the imperialist hold over India may be conveniently hurried on under disguise of reforming the "reforms".

India readily sees in the Simon commission all the elements of danger attendant upon reforming the "reforms", which in effect would be strengthening imperialist power, or the tightening of the empire. British imperialists are busy misleading Indian opinion in the hope of sidetracking their attention to smaller issues, such as an Indian personnel attached to or associated with the British executioners of a nation's freedom; Sir John Simon's alleged great personal virtues—affability, faith in democracy, etc. Vigorous attempts are being daily made—in which British labour parliamentarians' support and the ILP's double-faced democracy are more valuable than the Tory Party's well-known imperialist vigour—to narrow the fight as between a particular parliamentary committee

and a group of a score or so of Indian politicians, as if it were a matter of some personal injustice or misunderstanding, and not a life-and-death struggle between the last of the great empires and an ancient nation of three hundred million human beings.

It is likely that the Indian masses may not so easily surrender their rights to a small coterie of politicians as the British workers seem to have done, and the voice of true India, the heart-cry of her teeming workers and myriads of peasants, may still succeed and India's political leaders may not be drawn into the Birkenhead-MacDonald plot so dexterously cast by Simon. The commission may make two or three roving journeys all over India as a winter sport for two or three years, issue startling interim reports to provoke or bribe Indian public attention, and then leave the real struggle as between conquerors and a conquered people to where it may be, under pressure of world events and economic hardships.

It may equally be that the politicians will win the day and join hands over the stomachs of a starving people, and arrive at another momentary understanding only to fall out over the spoils later. So far the Indian leaders have displayed a clarity of vision and unity of purpose that has staggered their arrogant seducers in the British parliament, and their haughty terrorists in India. But what will be their next step? Can they merely say that because they will not betray their people into the snares of a Simon commission, or Lansbury's home (!)-rule recommendation, therefore they will lead their people out of bondage into freedom and out of misery into plenty?

#### IMPERIALISM OR BOLSHEVISM

The Indian leaders, like the German social-democrats and British labour leaders whom they criticise now so freely, must make up their minds on their future course. World events and world politics leave to them also the same choice as to others: they must imperialise themselves and share with their erstwhile opponents what

spoils are secured from exploiting and governing the masses, or they must bolshevise themselves and lead their masses to a program of common ownership, control and administration of all land, industries and state departments. There is no middle course, and there are no different nationalist ways to settle such large human problems, which are common to all nationalities.

If the first choice is made, Indian leaders must unite with Irwin, Baldwin, MacDonald, Simon, Birkenhead and Lansbury and Sankaran Nair, and, after a lot of noisy investigations, arguments and democratic flourishes, settle down to the daily routine of exploiting, drudging, impoverishing and governing their own people till their workers and peasants make a clean sweep of them along with the entire gang of international financiers and imperialist bosses. If they have the courage and foresight which saviours of conquered nations must have, their choice would be of the latter type. Of course, if our Indian politicians imperialise themselves, their outlook and their interests as labour-imperialists have done in Britain, they will also begin to talk glibly about home-rule, dominion status, British commonwealth, etc., which, to the masses in India and workers in Britain, can bring poor consolidation and can produce nothing but misery and degradation.

#### WHAT INDIAN INDEPENDENCE MEANS

Australia, Canada and New Zealand are largely of British stock. They need Britain's military protection, and Britain needs their economic products. Even in Africa the whites have a similar interest in the empire. But India is an alien country of three hundred millions of people as against British stock of scarcely a fourth of that number in whole empire. Equal rights for India inside such an empire would be a grave danger to the British bourgeoisie, and not a gift, and unless British domination can be preserved by hook or by crook, by terror or by polished roguery, by baldwinism or by macdonaldism, Britain has no use for India within the empire.

Within a few hours of independence, with control over her army, an India entitled to British rights within a British empire will, for example, claim, and literally fight for, her rights of colonisation in Australia, Africa and Canada, on equal terms. India's trade policy would antagonise Japan, America and other countries with Great Britain, if they both happen to be in the same empire. To talk of dominion home-rule for India when none of the conditions permitting it are existing, is pure political deception. If India is to be truly selfgoverning, Great Britain would be happier and with less responsibility with India as an outside independent country. Hence the Simon commission is to be appreciated in this sense correctly. This, or any other similar commission, whether composed of whites or browns or yellows, will never explore the chances of India's independence, but can only invent new forms of deception by which independent-looking political councils may continue to be under the final domination of the imperialists.

*Labour Monthly (?)*

### 35. THE BRITISH COMMISSION ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM IN INDIA

G. K. LUHANI

The British government has appointed a commission "to inquire into the working of the Indian constitution". The commission has been charged eventually to put before the "imperial parliament" tentative proposals of legislation "establishing, extending, modifying or restricting the degree of responsible government (in existence in India now)".

The "Indian constitution" in question was itself introduced by the government of India act of 1919. The act also provided for a definite time limit within which the constitution was to be revised by some such commission as has been set up now. The appointment of the present commission is thus an integral part of a settled policy.

But the precise moment chosen to bring the commission into life is highly significant.

The British government was under no 'constitutional' obligation to give effect in 1927 to that part of the government of India act of 1919 which provides for the setting up of the apparatus of revision. Under the terms of the act, it could have postponed the appointment of the commission for another 2 years, i.e. till the end of 1929. As a matter of fact the repeated demand of the right wing of the Indian nationalists for the appointment of the commission earlier than the date fixed in the act of 1919 had up till now met with a flat refusal.

In arriving at this decision, the British government was certainly influenced by "various reasons" arising out of interparty politics in England as well as the internal situation of India. It must have been anxious to forestall the possible verdict of the approaching general election which may take place within the next 2 years, oust the Conservative Party from office and thus throw the burden of "deciding the whole future of India" entirely on the less worthy shoulders of the Labour Party or a liberal-labour coalition. It also must have had in mind the steady revolutionisation of the masses in India and the importance of the present phase in the evolution of the political relations between the Indian bourgeoisie and British imperialism.

But there is still another consideration which must have weighed more than any other. It is the necessity of securing the flank in India in the coming war against the USSR with the political preparation of which the present government of England practically confounds its *raison d'être*. It is on account of the necessities of its policy of aggression against the USSR that the conservative cabinet

has chosen the present moment to dangle before the eyes of the Indian bourgeoisie the promise of political concessions in the shape of "this most important royal commission".

It is interesting to recall that a similar consideration of strategy weighed heavily with former British cabinet when it decided in 1917 to make a "solemn" promise to the people of India to grant "responsible government"—the promise out of which grew the present 'Indian constitution'. By that promise, imperialist England secured, during a critical phase of the last world war, the neutrality of the Indian bourgeoisie and even its help in the recruitment of the manpower of India to carry the fight against Germany to a victorious conclusion.

But the situation in India in 1927 is quite different from that in 1917. For one thing, the contradiction of interests of the growing Indian bourgeoisie and British imperialism has become more acute and irreconcilable. The political concessions which British imperialism is in a position to make are not of a nature to satisfy the Indian bourgeoisie; while it cannot make other concessions without virtually abdicating its position as the paramount power in India.

The commission which has just been appointed accentuates this dilemma.

The left wing of the nationalist movement of India has been as a matter of principle denying the competence of the "imperialist parliament" in England to determine the constitution of India. It has been asserting "the inherent and ineffaceable rights" of Indian people to determine the character and tempo of their political advance without reference to the convenience of the imperialist government. It is opposed to the idea of a British commission on constitutional reform for India. But the revolutionary implications of such a position have not up till now been embodied in a program of action.

The right wing of the nationalist movement is willing to "cooperate" with the imperialist authorities in framing the constitution of India. It is, however, opposed to a constitution which may be concocted by the imperialist auth-

rities without the responsible participation of rightwing leaders.

The actual commission consists only of members of British parliament chosen from the conservative, liberal and labour parties. There are no Indians on the commission and none of the nationalist parties in India are in any way represented in it. Anticipating the opposition of the whole nationalist movement to such a commission, the viceroy of India has proposed a cumbersome scheme to associate in a subordinate capacity delegations of India legislative bodies with the labour of the commission. It is, however, a testimony to the real crisis through which British imperialism in India is passing that the viceroy has supplemented his declaration in the name of "the rich prize of achievement of the common purpose which we may assuredly win together, but can hardly win in separation".

All the parties comprising the nationalist movement have reacted to the appointment of the commission with a practically unanimous opposition. The Bengal section of the Swaraj Party has proclaimed in its manifesto that "it is for the people of India to frame India's constitution". The *Bombay Chronicle*, organ of the National Congress, characterises the commission as 'a machiavellian device of arrogant imperialists who are determined to exploit the divisions of India to humiliate and dragoon her into accepting a dictated and fraudulent constitution'. The rightwing leaders who have been waiting in an expectant mood have now been disillusioned and have come forward with proclamations to the rank-and-file "not to cooperate with the commission".

Finally, at a conference of all the nationalist parties, the policy of boycott has been adopted as a reply to the "insolent challenge" of British imperialism. It, however, remains for the Indian National Congress which is meeting in its annual session in December to give a more official character to the campaign of boycott and realise it organisationally.

The situation created in India now is certainly rich with revolutionary possibilities. The only safeguard against

their degeneration into reformist compromise is an energetic and concerted action by the nationalist left wing and the Workers' and Peasants' Party to orientate the whole anti-imperialist movement towards the vast exploited masses and find in their revolutionary organisation the sure "sanction" for coercing British imperialism into submission to the fundamental demands of the national-revolutionary movement.

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## XI. Madras Session of the Congress and the Role of the Left-wing and the WPP

### 36. MANIFESTO OF THE WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' PARTY TO THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

The appointment of the statutory commission, by the attention it has attracted and the passion it has aroused, is likely to dominate the attention of the Indian public for some time to come. Though in itself only a step in the development of imperialist policy it is probably destined to be considerable importance in determining the future lines of political development in India.

It is, therefore, highly necessary that the National Congress, which claims to speak with the voice of the people of India and to express their desire for swaraj, should consider carefully its conduct in relation to this momentous event, and should bear in mind its own representative character.

The vocal section of the nation is practically unanimous in advocating boycott of the commission, as at present constituted, and there is no doubt that the silent masses will be found eager to support an attitude of boycott. The rally of all sections, including many representatives of the bourgeoisie (liberal and moderate politicians) to the idea of boycott is to be welcomed, and their cooperation on a common platform with the National Congress, if that is possible, is desirable.

But it seems to the Workers' and Peasants' Party necessary to utter a warning as to the dangers of such coopera-

tion. The majority of the moderate leaders enter the boycott campaign with motives different from those which animate the mass of the people and their popular representatives. Their protest is against the personnel of the commission, not against its functions and the imperialist policy which it is designed to carry out. Their participation in the propaganda of boycott will tend to lead India into the futile demand for representation on the commission (in one form or another, either by actual Indian membership, or in a parallel Indian commission, in a "round-table conference") instead of along the fruitful path of mass protest against, and boycott of, any and every commission responsible to the British government.

It is essential that in its desire to retain the support of moderate sections, the Congress should not be led to sacrifice its principles or to modify its campaign.

First it must be made clear that the Congress boycotts the commission, not because of its personnel, or any accidental circumstance of its appointment, but on principle. The Congress does not recognise the right of the British government, or of any commission appointed by it, whether containing Indian members or not, to determine the nature of the future government of India. The Indian richer classes, because of their own sectional interests, are unwilling to break the British connection, and are force to admit Britain's right to political dictatorship in India. The mass of the people, represented in the Congress, whose interests are opposed to those of the richer classes, cannot agree to this position. They stand for complete national independence.

Second, it is necessary that the boycott campaign should not be confined to the futile and unrepresentative legislatures. The Congress should bring into the campaign the widest masses of the people, the working class and the peasantry, who alone can supply the strength to make a real boycott effective. It must therefore be made clear that the boycott is a step towards the attainment of national freedom, and that any improvement in the miserable lot of

the mass of the population is dependent upon swaraj and the cessation of imperialist exploitation. The masses will willingly take up a campaign designed to lead towards the relief of their pressing economic and social needs, and only in this way can they act.

But such a campaign, which should aim at the eventual nonpayment of taxes, and the declaration of a general-strike, will not receive the support of the landowners and commercial and industrial capitalists, whose sectional interests are directly threatened thereby. The experience of the noncooperation movement clearly shows this fact. But the peasants and the working class who form the great majority of the nation, with the "intellectual" and middle classes, whose fundamental interests are with the masses, cannot hold their hand for fear of frightening the upper strata, who have so often in the past led them astray. The Indian bourgeois class, with its political spokesmen, has again and again proved to be a broken reed. The masses must learn to stand without their support.

#### A "ROUND-TABLE CONFERENCE"?

It must be said that the Swaraj Party itself cannot be exempted from this charge. Organised as it is solely for assembly and council work, in which it represents part of a thin upper crust of less than five per cent of the population, it inevitably tends to voice the views of the upper classes, and with few exceptions, its members are to be locked up equally guilty with the bourgeois liberals, moderates and responsivists.

The official demand, which the Swaraj Party, supported by other sections, has often made in the assembly, is for a "round-table conference". This idea is superficially more attractive than the demands for Indian membership of the commission, since it permits India's representatives to be appointed nominally by India, instead of by the British government. But it is fundamentally a demand of the same type. A round-table conference is one which permits of no compromise. India requires strength, and the demand for

a round-table conference, a demand which appeals merely to those classes which can gain from a possible compromise with imperialism, in no way adds to India's strength.

Thus there is a serious danger that the Congress will allow itself to be led astray by the clamour of the bourgeois representatives both within and without, who will attempt to keep the boycott campaign within the confines of the councils, and will try to turn it in the direction of pressing for concessions, in regard to membership of the commission or the appointment of a supplementary Indian commission, or a round-table conference. Neither of these things must be allowed. The platform of the campaign must be laid down definitely by the Congress, and any who are willing to accept it may then cooperate.

#### A CONSTITUTION FOR INDIA

It has been often suggested that the Congress should officially prepare a draft constitution, which should be presented to the government as the minimum demand with which it can be satisfied. It is clearly necessary that the demands of the people must be put forward in an authoritative form by the National Congress, and such sanctions as it is within the power of the people to adopt must then be used to gain those demands. And among the demands to be presented, a constitution drafted by representatives of the Indian people will take an important place.

The detailed working out of the provisions of a constitution is of minor importance. The broad principles on which it must be based are clear. First, it must declare complete independence for India. No compromise such as "dominion status", which would give the appearance of autonomy without removing the reality of exploitation, cannot be accepted by the people as a whole. Second, it must be democratic. Every adult persons must be entitled to vote. Third, the paramount need at the present stage is a strong national representative body, which can voice the demands of India as a whole. Provincial or linguistic divisions are for the present comparatively unimportant. Fourth,

while protection of minorities is ultimately necessary, there is no place for communal representation. The recent growth of communalism was stimulated by the electorates provided by the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme. And in any case there is no danger of the neglect of the rights of sections by a really popular assembly since the interests of the people are one. Communalism will be got rid of by the united action of the mass of the people, among whom there are no essential differences.

Thus India must demand an absolutely unrestricted national constituent assembly, elected by universal adult suffrage, which shall be the supreme organ for expressing the will of the people. Nothing short of that can be accepted. India must become a democratic country.

But, while it is necessary to put forward the demand for a constitution drafted by the representatives of the people, and establishing a constituent assembly, such a demand by itself does not more than touch the fringe of the real needs which the masses feel and suffer. It is a necessity, but only a preliminary. It is required to provide the means whereby the needs of the people can be expressed and remedied. And these needs are primarily social and economic.

The national government must guarantee to the peasants: the land belongs to the toiler; reduction of land rents; exemption from rent for poor peasants; protection against the avarice of moneylenders; assistance by means of credits to the cultivator.

For the industrial workers, there must be guaranteed: the eight-hour day; a minimum living wage.

Legislation in regard to working conditions and housing.

State provision for the unemployed.

Public utilities must be the property of the nation. Railways, telegraphs, waterways, etc. must be run for the public use.

Workers and peasants must be given full rights of combination and of strike.

There must be free primary education for all.

Freedom of religion and worship, freedom of the press and of speech.

These are the main points of a program which will unite the overwhelming majority of the people and set them in irresistible action. The program of bourgeois nationalism (defence of the interests of the landowning and capitalist classes has failed to stir the enthusiasm of the nation. The people must assert itself and move towards freedom in spite of the timidity of the bourgeoisie. The National Congress must be liberated from the influence of their spokesmen. Those willing to fight honestly and courageously for freedom must become the leaders of the people. The National Congress, if it wishes to conduct the struggle for national liberation, must become the party of the people, representing not the fortunate few of the electorate but the unfranchised majority. Council chambers present too restricted a field of operation for the party of the people, which must find much wider spheres of action.

A national constituent assembly, guaranteeing complete national independence and the democratisation of national life in every respect—this must be the main plank of the congress platform. The battle to realise this program must be fought with the slogan: "*Land, Bread and Education.*"

The appointment of the statutory commission gives us an opportunity to start this battle in right earnest. This insulting demonstration that imperialism is still in the saddle and intends to remain on our backs, has stirred the nation as it has not been stirred for many years. The reaction of public opinion has been healthy and vigorous. The Congress must seize its chance, place its popular democratic program before the people, and transform the boycott of the statutory commission, in spite of doubtful friends and timid allies, from a mere parliamentary demonstration into the final nationwide fight for swaraj.

### 37. THE NATIONAL CONGRESS (Excerpts)

Another year gone. The stage is being set for the annual session of the National Congress. This year this tragicomedy will be enacted under the ominous shadow of the royal commission on constitutional reform. Every one is wondering how the Congress will react to the latest and greatest insolence of imperialism. Speculation about boycotting the commission is rife. Will the Congress sanction boycott?...

They talk of boycotting the royal commission. Did imperialism take this possibility in view? It did; but cynically disregarded it in view of past experiences. Boycott will not kill the commission. The Indian bourgeoisie, perhaps, will boycott the royal commission, but will accept its recommendations finally, as their kind in Egypt did. These boycotted the Milner commission, but happily accepted the "independence" granted by British imperialism on the recommendation of that commission.

The finding of the commission will of course be influenced by the measures taken in reply to the insolent challenge of imperialism. Judging them from their past, the bourgeois nationalists, irrespective of their party affiliations, cannot be expected to organise such measures as would tell upon the policy of imperialism. The proposed boycott will be effective only in the case of its being a lever to develop a mass movement against imperialism; and a mass movement cannot be developed with the futile slogans of constitutional opposition as the boycott contemplated by the nationalist bourgeois is very likely to be. A mass movement is a powerful revolutionary weapon and can be developed only with revolutionary slogans. The slogan "Boycott the Royal Commission" has a very limited possibility. It applies only to those who will be asked to express their views as regards the constitutional progress of India. More than 98 per cent of the population do not come under this category; and, therefore, the slogan "Boycott the Commission" has no practical application for them. The refusal of

a few hundred bourgeois politicians to give evidence before the commission will not shake the position of imperialism. unless this refusal becomes the expression of the will of the entire people to reply to the imperialist challenge with a revolutionary struggle. The slogan, 'Boycott the Royal Commission" should therefore be supplemented by other slogans having practical bearing upon the masses, if the boycott is seriously meant.

Further, boycott is a passive program. A movement cannot go very far with a negative attitude. There must be a positive side to it. If the bourgeois leaders want the support of the masses in boycotting the commission, they must put before the country what they demand instead of the royal commission. We know what their demand is. They would be satisfied if the commission were otherwise constituted, having upon it representatives of their class. This demand reflects the interests, not of the nation, but of one class. This is not a demand for national independence; it is holding the olive branch to imperialism. The nationalist bourgeoisie desire to negotiate a compromise with imperialism and would like to use the masses as pawns in the game. But imperialism will not be fooled. It is aware of the inability and unwillingness of the nationalist bourgeoisie to organise a militant mass movement as the corollary to the boycott campaign. It remains to be seen if the bourgeois nationalist will shake this smug confidence of imperialism by proving that they have learned from the experience of the last decade, particularly from the non-cooperation movement.

The boycott of the commission should be connected with a positive demand on the support of which a mass movement must be organised. The reply to the imperialist challenge should be: "We spit on your royal commission whose authority we totally disregard. We do not recognise your right to determine the constitutional progress of India. That right belongs only to the Indian people who are determined to conquer that right at all cost and by all means." The demand should be the convocation by the National Congress of a constituent assembly which will be the

supreme organ of the people's power and as such settle the question as regards the form of government, relation with Britain, etc. The entire people must participate in the election of the constituent assembly. Committees for the election of the constituent assembly should be set up all over the country. Representatives of all the political parties, workers and peasants organisations and all other democratic bodies will sit on these committees. The election campaign must be carried on throughout the country over a period of at least a year. The largest possible section of the population should be drawn into the campaign through mass meetings, demonstrations, strikes, etc.

This is the only way in which the insolent challenge of imperialism can be effectively replied to and a real struggle for national freedom undertaken. The masses will eagerly join in such a struggle. The Trade Union Congress has already declared its determination to support the boycott.

The National Congress this year is faced with the task of giving the lead for the organisation of this mass movement. If it rises up to this task, it may still rescue itself from the process of decay that has been going on during the last year. Failure to take up the challenge of imperialism will spell the political death of the National Congress.

“Point of View”

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### 38. IMPERIALISM AND INDIAN NATIONALISM

(Excerpts)

M. N. Roy

The annual meeting of the Indian National Congress has passed a resolution declaring complete independence

] to be its ultimate aim. The practical significance of this resolution is not so great as it may appear on the face of it. Nevertheless, the fact remains that for the first time, since its foundation forty-two years ago, the National Congress has made such a declaration. It is to be read only as the weather signal.

The policy of imperialism is economic concession, but political suppression. Imperialism can afford to make some economic concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie (it is forced to do so by its internal crisis) only in case it maintains the monopoly of political power. Failure to understand this fundamental principle of imperialist policy created in the Indian bourgeois nationalist movement the illusion of "equal partnership inside the empire". Now it has become brutally clear that the reformist program of bourgeois nationalism is not realisable. The petty-bourgeois Congress (formerly Swaraj) Party which for several years veiled its program of compromise with imperialist domination in return for some concessions to native capitalism, in parliamentary obstruction, stands exposed in its native importance. The resolution of the Madras congress is only a stratagem to hide this total political bankruptcy.

The crux of the situation lies elsewhere. It is to be found in the remarkable leftward swing of the Trade Union Congress. This has also declared in favour of boycott. In view of the fact that the working class have no direct concern with the royal commission, since as a class their views will not be consulted, the decision of the Trade Union Congress has one implication, namely, that the working class enter the struggle against imperialism as an independent political force. This gives the new boycott movement potentially much more a revolutionary significance than the previous, when the working class was used by the bourgeoisie as a pawn in the game, and was misled and betrayed by the reactionary petty bourgeoisie. When, six years back, the revolutionary upheaval of the workers and peasants masses made the nationalist movement a powerful challenge to imperialist domination and brought it nearly down (the bourgeois nationalist leaders themselves testify

to this) there did not exist in the country a revolutionary political party to lead that upheaval. Today the situation has changed essentially, if not entirely. The appearance of the working class as an independent political factor in the present critical situation is due to the fact that they found their own party which leads them for the promotion of their class interests. Apart from the Communist Party, which could develop but slowly owing to imperialist terror aided and abetted by the hatred and hostility of the nationalist bourgeoisie, there has come into existence the Workers' and Peasants' Party. The activities of the Workers' and Peasants' Party and the revolutionary consciousness created thereby among the masses have contributed largely to the resolution of the Madras National Congress.

Nearly a year before the petty-bourgeois left wing of the National Congress could have the courage to express its desire for independence, the Workers' and Peasants' Party had placed before the country a comprehensive program of national revolution. Its representatives on the congress executive repeatedly brought this program for adoption by the Congress, only to be rejected. It is again the Workers' and Peasants' Party and the communists who from the very beginning pointed out the insufficiency of the slogan of boycott, and proposed that this negative slogan must be supplemented by positive demands. They have begun the agitation for the election of a constituent assembly which should decide the political future of India. If the National Congress and the individual bourgeois parties accept this proposal, a very broad anti-imperialist front will be created and the boycott will not fizzle out as on the previous occasion, but will be the lever to develop a mighty mass movement to realise the desire expressed in the Madras congress. But there is sufficient reason to doubt that the bourgeoisie will participate in such a revolutionary struggle. Even the petty bourgeois intelligentsia cannot be fully relied upon. Apart from the lessons of the past the statements made by bourgeois nationalist leaders inside and outside the country warrant such doubt. For example, the congress leader, Motilal

Nehru (who by the way, stayed away from this year's session obviously in order not to commit himself one way or the other) appeared before the general council of the League against Imperialism held in Brussels on 9-11 December to express bitter disappointment at the behaviour of the British Labour Party. But at the same time, to disassociate himself from any possible revolutionary significance of his action, he took great care to explain that he did not belong to that section of the nationalist movement which desired separation from the British empire. When at the end of the same month, on the motion of his son, the National Congress declared independence as its goal, the old Nehru sat in England looking out for an opening to begin negotiation with Birkenhead with the object of tiding over the crisis. Whenever such an opening will be available he will tell British imperialism: "Don't take the young chaps at home seriously, I will know how to manage them."

But the real struggle is not held up by the compromise seeking bourgeois politicians. The workers have begun it. The Municipal Worker's Union of Bombay (where the royal commission will first touch Indian soil) has decided to strike on the day of commission's arrival. The British authorities instantly challenged the legality of the strike, but in remarkable contrast to previous experience, the head of the union, who belongs to the Workers' and Peasants' Party declared that the workers would strike disregarding the threat of dismissal and prosecution. Very likely the harbour workers and eventually the railwaymen will follow the lead, beginning a real struggle in spite of the counterrevolutionary bourgeois nationalist parties.

### 39. THE MADRAS CONGRESS

The Madras congress has become conspicuous not because it passed resolution of boycott of the Simon commission for that has been done even by the liberals, nor because it emphasised the necessity of intercommunal unity, but because it adopted the resolution of complete national independence for India and also condemned Great Britain's militarist aggression against Russia.

The adoption of the resolution of complete national independence is unique event in the history of the Congress. The same resolution has met with persistent defeat during several years past. Even during the stormy days of noncooperation, the dictator of the movement the Mahatma refused to define swaraj as complete independence. The adoption of the resolution now shows, firstly, that the Indian bourgeoisie is so indignant at "the gratuitous insult" offered by British imperialists that it has been obliged to make this gesture of parting company with them, secondly, that the left movement led by middleclass intellectuals is gaining ground.

The news agencies have not told the outside world what steps the Congress has proposed to take to reach its new goal. Naturally the only effective step, as also forecast by the nationalist press (*Forward*, 7 December) would be to launch, a mass movement in the country. In that case the Congress would be giving a fitting reply to the insolent challenge put forward by British imperialism. On the other hand we are told by Reuter that the resolution of complete independence "was accompanied with the condition that it did not involve any change in the congress creed regarding swaraj". The Congress creed requires "the obtainment of swaraj by all peaceful and legitimate means". It would appear from this that the congress leaders felt that by adopting the resolution of complete independence they were committing themselves to means other than "peaceful and legitimate". Judging from the past history of the Congress the peaceful and legitimate means do not exclude "mass civil disobedience" and non-payment of taxes, and some leaders were on the eve of

the Congress actually talking of adopting these two means. Short of armed revolt these two weapons are most effective and revolutionary at the same time. If the congress leaders by putting the condition of having their creed intact meant to exclude only the armed revolt and have resolved to launch a mass movement including as its ultimate stages mass civil disobedience and nonpayment of taxes, the creed can remain unaltered without doing any immediate harm to the country. But the history of bourgeois nationalism does not inspire one with the hope that the Congress would take these steps of direct action. If by some miracle the Congress adopt this course the world would have the occasion of witnessing another Bardoli—the class interests of the Indian bourgeoisie would be served and saved from the rising tide of peasantry and workers on the excuse of "peaceful and legitimate means". And precisely this is the significance of saving the idol of the 'creed'.

If a report published in the *Daily Herald* to the effect that the adoption of the independence resolution "is a moral gesture to the world and real opinion favours self-government on a dominion basis" be true the empty gesture would fail to overawe Birkenhead and his imperialist band.

By condemning Britain's aggressive preparations against the USSR and supporting the League against Imperialism the Congress has taken cognisance of its right place amongst the anti-imperialist bodies. It has gone a step further in this direction by "urging the British government to put an end to any war preparations in India and the eastern seas and demanding the recall of Indian troops from China, Iraq and other eastern countries. These protests and demands are however not of much avail unless they are backed by a mass action.

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